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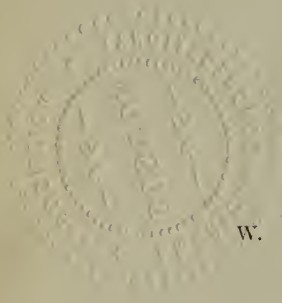
Joseph Ogle

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## PREFACE.

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This book has been prepared under the following circumstances. The Dorset Association of Congregational Churches was formed at Wareham, in September, 1795, and among the suggestions for celebrating its Centenary, the one generally approved was the compilation of a volume giving an account of the Congregational Churches in Dorset, from their origin to the present time. The ministers whose names appear on the title page were requested by the Executive Committee to undertake the task. The work has been delayed by the numerous engagements of the Editors in their ministerial capacity, and especially by the lack of local information. In many cases the old records of the Churches have been lost or destroyed, and the prospect of being able to give anything like a connected and satisfactory history was at one time dark indeed ; it seemed like having to make bricks without clay as well as straw. Valuable materials, however, were found in the British Museum, Dr. Williams' Library, the Library at Lambeth Palace, the Public Record Office, and Somerset House enabling the story to be pieced together with more or less completeness ; and to the authorities of these institutions the Editors' best thanks are tendered for their courtesy and readiness to assist them in their researches ; their sincere thanks are also due to the pastors and churches in the county for cheerfully rendering what assistance lay in their power ; to the managers of the Congregational Fund Board for permission to inspect their minutes ; to Mr. S. W. Chandler, B.A., who, with his father, the late Mr. B. Chandler, has for many years given gratuitous legal assistance to the Dorset Churches, for permission to peruse papers in his possession ; to Mr. W. Mate, for valuable assistance ; and

to others too numerous to mention who have furnished information, lent documents, or corrected proofs. While the Editors have done their best, leaving untried no means known to them of making the information in the following pages complete, they are more conscious than anybody else can be of the defects and shortcomings of the work they now send forth, with the hope that at some future time they, or others, may have the opportunity of preparing a more complete account of the history and work of the Congregational Churches of Dorset.

## INTRODUCTION.

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The time has long since passed away when it was necessary to apologise for the existence of Congregational Churches. By their number, by the spiritual work they have done, and by their undoubted services to the cause of civil and religious liberty, they have won for themselves a place among the recognised religious institutions of our country. In this volume an effort has been made to tell the story of the existing churches in Dorset. They form, however, but a small part of the Congregational churches of this and other lands. It has not been possible in these necessarily somewhat fragmentary sketches to tell the story of the great religious movement, of which they are the outcome. To have attempted it would have required enormously more space than was at our disposal, and would have led to a repetition, which the writers have tried to avoid.

It may not, however, be without interest and use to trace the movement referred to, in briefest outline, here. The Congregational Churches of England are the distinct children of the Protestant Reformation—the natural and most complete embodiment of its essential principle. “The Bible,” said an old writer, “is the religion of Protestants.” It was the discovery of the Bible that led Luther to his great protest against the polity, the teaching, and the corruptions of the Church of Rome, in his day. When Henry VIII., “the Defender of the Faith,” for his own reasons, cast in his lot with the reformers, he caused the Bible to be printed and set up in the churches, and made accessible to the people. This, together with the revival of learning and the invention of printing, which enabled men to make their thoughts known, resulted in dissatisfaction with such a partial reformation

as the king was prepared to concede. Hence there arose those who advocated a further reformation—a purification of the church from the remaining corruptions of Rome—and were called Puritans.

When Mary came to the throne many of these Puritans fled to the continent, where they associated with the reformers in Germany and elsewhere. On the accession of Elizabeth they returned, with their views greatly enlarged. They were no longer prepared to accept such a modified reformation as would have satisfied them at an earlier period. But they were divided into two classes. There were those who desired to reform the Church of England *from within*, retaining the episcopal form of church government, and the connection with the State, but sweeping away idolatrous ceremonies, and bringing the forms of worship and teaching into accord with those of “the best reformed churches abroad.” These retained the name of Puritans. There were, however, others, mostly younger and more ardent spirits, whose acquaintance with the foreign reformers and their renewed study of the New Testament led them to advocate more drastic changes. They were not content with the reformation of the ceremonies and doctrines of the church while retaining its external constitution. They had learnt that the New Testament churches were formed, not of all the people living within a given area, as, for instance, a parish ; but of those who had personally accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and gave evidence in their lives that they were changed and renewed in heart ; and that the churches composed of such people were self-governing communities, managing their own affairs, and independent of the civil authorities or any external control, responsible neither to princes, nor to diocesan bishops (officials unknown to the New Testament), but to the only head of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ. These were no mere pious opinions, which they held in secret. They avowed them, and, despairing of any assistance from the existing authorities, began to act upon them “without tarrying for any.” Separating themselves from the existing churches, they formed little groups of converted persons, gathered out of the world ; met together for worship and the celebration of

the Sacraments, and appointed their own pastors and deacons. To these more extreme reformers, the real founders of the Congregational churches, was given the name of Separatists; and their churches were called "*gathered churches*," to distinguish them from the *parochial* churches, which included all the people living in a parish, whether converted or unconverted. These Separatists, sometimes called Brownists, from one of their earliest and clearest advocates—Robert Browne—had a very hard time under Elizabeth. Multitudes of them were cast into foul dungeons. Many were hanged, among them were Penry, Greenwood and Barrowe. But, notwithstanding all the opposition of the rulers in Church and State, they adhered to their principles, which a closer study of the New Testament confirmed them in, and their numbers grew.

When James I. came to the throne, both Puritans and Separatists hoped that his Scotch training and experience would dispose him to make their position easier. But in this they were mistaken. The fatal Stuart desire for uncontrolled power seems to have thrown him into the arms of the Episcopal party, which appeared a fitter instrument for carrying out his purposes. "Under his irritating rule," says Perry (*History of the English Church*, p. 401), "took place in England that ominous conjunction of Patriots and Puritans, destined to produce such terrible results in the next reign."

Soon after Charles I. became King the condition of the Puritans and Separatists had become so unendurable that those who could, resolved to leave their native land, and seek liberty of conscience in the wilds of North America. A company, organised by the Rev. John White, of Dorchester, largely composed of Dorset men, departed in 1629, and was succeeded by many others. In 1634, Laud complained that there were Puritans in nearly every parish of Dorset. They were numerous also in London, the eastern counties and elsewhere. Relief came to them when the King's arbitrary proceedings had provoked a rupture with the Parliament. In November, 1640, Parliament appointed a committee of the whole house, "to enquire into the scandalous



immoralities of the clergy." This was followed in December, 1642, by a Committee for Plundered Ministers. By these committees many of the clergy were dispossessed of their livings, either for unfitness for the sacred office, or on account of their decided opposition to the *de facto* government and sympathy with the King. To the churches thus rendered vacant other ministers were appointed, sometimes called "intruders," who were to pay to the sequestered ministers, if married, one fifth of the annual income. Most of these ministers called themselves Presbyterian, though there were among them a good many Congregationalists and Baptists. In many cases the Separatist minister, whose life had been one long series of privations, sufferings and hidings; who had been compelled to meet his little flock by stealth, suddenly found the tables turned and his persecutors cast down, while he stepped into the enjoyment of liberty and the possession of the parish church. In 1645 the use of the Prayer Book, which it was declared had fostered superstition and had been exalted as if there were no other way to worship God, was prohibited, not only in the parish churches, but, which was greatly to be regretted, in private houses. Irregularities in the appointments of ministers, a growing disposition to monopolise them by the Presbyterians, and a proposal to confiscate the rights of patrons, caused Cromwell to issue his famous ordinance in March, 1654, creating the Triers (see pages 93, 94). Henceforth there was liberty to all denominations, and a larger proportion of Congregationalists; Baptists and others were promoted to the vacant livings. It has been the fashion to speak of the ministers so appointed as a rabble of ignorant fanatics, tapsters and serving-men. The writer has carefully searched in every direction and has found no confirmation of the truth of this statement, which may be branded as a calumny. So far as he had been able to ascertain, not one of the ministers so appointed was removed in 1660 or 1662 for ignorance, immorality, incompetance, or any other shortcoming, if he was prepared to accept the Prayer Book and submit to ordination at the hands of a bishop. The rectors and vicars who were Congregationalists proceeded to organise "gathered churches," which met in the parish churches. One



such church, whose minister was the Rev. John White, met in Westminster Abbey.

After the death of Cromwell, a strong desire was felt by Parliament to re-call the exiled King—Charles II.—in the hope that the lessons of adversity would have disposed him to constitutional rule. Before deciding on his recall, a deputation was appointed to wait upon him. Charles immediately issued his Declaration from Breda, which declared that should he be restored, “no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the Kingdom.” He returned in 1660, and immediately all the clergy who had been dispossessed during the Civil Wars and the Commonwealth, no matter what the reason of their dismissal, claimed to “return with His Majesty,” and were reinstated. Not content with this, all dissenters were made incapable of holding office in any Corporation (see Corporation Act, Appendix, page 418), and in 1662 an Act, called the Act of Uniformity (see Appendix, page 418) was passed, which ejected all ministers from parish churches who could not “assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book of Common Prayer,” or, who had not before August 24th, 1662, received ordination from one of the bishops.

The Savoy Conference had made it plain that the Puritan clergy objected, among other things, to the use of the word “priest” instead of minister, in the Prayer Book ; to the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration set forth in the Catechism, the Baptismal and the Burial Service ; to the admission to the Lord’s Supper of those who had made no profession of personal faith in Christ, or whose lives did not give evidence of the truth of their profession ; to the *compulsory* kneeling at the Lord’s Supper ; to the *compulsory* wearing of the surplice, and the use of the sign of the cross in baptism ; to the priestly power of confessing and forgiving sins professed to be conferred by the bishops at Ordination, and set forth in the Visitation of the Sick and elsewhere ; and generally to the enormous and exclusive power conferred on the bishops, as not in accord with the New Testament usage or primitive custom—in a word, they objected to those parts of the Prayer Book th<sub>a</sub>

have been the strength and support of the sacerdotal party in the Church of England, and are a source of sorrow and weakness to multitudes of sound Protestants in that church to-day. No concessions were, however, made. On the contrary, alterations were made in the Prayer Book which, says Perry, "gave it on the whole a more catholic tone, getting rid of some of the marks of foreign Protestant influence. Certainly the changes were not such as to make the book more acceptable to the Puritans."

The conditions of subscriptions were purposely made hard, so as to drive out the evangelical portion of the clergy, and to gratify the revengeful feelings of those who had now returned to power. The date, too, on which the Act was to come into operation, was fixed for the purpose of making it as oppressive as possible, for at that date a whole year's tithe was due, but not paid. Great were the searchings of heart in thousands of parsonages as the 24th of August drew near. Many felt that they could not, with a good conscience, make the declarations required of them, others could not confess themselves to have been no ministers hitherto, by submitting to re-ordination. But the claims of delicate wives and little children dependent on them for bread, the opportunity of continuing their work, and their natural desire to retain their comfortable homes, all disposed them to conformity, had it been anyway possible. To their everlasting honour, more than two thousand, a fifth of the entire clergy, laid down their office without an angry word, only with sighs of regret that it should be necessary. Many of them preached farewell sermons on the Sunday before Bartholomew Day, and a good number of them have come down to us. They are marvels of self-repression, grave, dignified, and eminently Christian. Of this two thousand, some seventy or eighty were ministers in Dorset (see Appendix, page 407), a very large number for so small a county.

J. R. Green, in his *Short History of the English people*, commenting on the operation of the Act, says, "the rectors and vicars who were driven out, were the most learned and the most active of their order . . . men whose zeal and labour had diffused throughout the country a greater appearance of piety and religion than it had ever displayed before." He adds that "the

expulsion of these men was far more to the Church of England than the loss of their individual services. It was the definite expulsion of a great party, which from the time of the Reformation, had played the most active and popular part in the life of the church. It was the close of an effort which had been going on ever since Elizabeth's accession to bring the English communion into closer relations with the Reformed communions of the continent, and into greater harmony with the religious instincts of the nation at large. The Church of England stood alone among the churches of the Christian world. . . . By its rejection of all but episcopal orders, the Act of Uniformity severed it irretrievable from the general body of the Protestant churches whether Lutheran or Reformed. And whilst thus cut off from all healthy religious communion with the world without, it sank into immobility within. With the expulsion of the Puritan clergy, all change, all efforts after reform, all national development suddenly stopped. From that time to this the Episcopal church has been unable to meet the varying spiritual needs of its adherents by any modifications of its government or its worship."

The ejected rectors and vicars, etc., had endeared themselves to their flocks by their services and by their political sympathies. Accordingly, when they were ejected from the parish churches, many of their flocks—including a large aristocratic element—accompanied them and were anxious to continue to enjoy their ministrations. This was especially the case where there were "gathered churches," which could no longer meet in the parish churches.

Had the deprivation of the Nonconforming clergy been followed by freedom to worship God according to their consciences, the disruption in Scotland in 1843, would probably have been anticipated by over two hundred years, and one or more great Free Churches would have arisen in England. But this the rulers were determined to prevent. Smarting under the recollection of twenty years in which they, who were, as they considered, the natural ruling classes, had been humiliated, they determined to crush those whom they believed to be—as the Devon magis-

trates phrased it—"no more to be trusted in any civil society than beasts of prey." They could not get back the estates that had changed hands during the troublous times—the Act of Indemnity made that impossible. But they could strike at their ancient opponents through their ministers. The Act of Uniformity had deprived them of their livings, but not of their congregations. The first Conventicle Act, passed in 1664 (Appendix p. 420) aimed at depriving them of their congregations, by making it penal to hold or attend services in private houses, where five persons beyond the family were present. This Act not proving effectual the Five Mile Act followed the next year (Appendix p. 421) banishing the ministers from the only places where they could hope to find a congregation. Meetings being still held, in defiance of the law, a second and more terrible Conventicle Act was passed in 1667 (Appendix p. 422). Ministers and people were driven to all sorts of shifts and contrivances, they met in woods, in caves, in lonely hollows, in barns, in brewhouses, early in the morning or at dead of night. They were harried, had their places of worship broken into and broken up by magistrates and militia officers. They were carried by scores before the magistrates and fined and imprisoned. But the more they suffered for them, the dearer their principles became to them.

At length the King's anxiety to find some way by which he could grant liberty of worship to his fellow Papists led James II. to proclaim an Indulgence for Nonconformists of every name in March, 1672. Immediately an immense number of ministers availed themselves of the privilege offered, and took out licenses for themselves and their places of worship (usually private houses) and Meeting-houses began to spring up on every hand. The indulgence was withdrawn the next year and persecution broke out afresh. The country was alive with informers.

Monmouth's landing at Lyme Regis in June, 1685, was the signal for another demonstration of the impotence of persecution to destroy the dissenters, especially in the West. Those who flocked to his standard by thousands were, almost to a man, Nonconformists, so much so, that the ill-fated rising was called "The Dissenters' Rebellion." After Sedgemoor, Jefferys was let



loose upon them, and the Bloody Assizes followed. Jefferys boasted that on this one circuit he had condemned more people to death than all the judges, from the Norman Conquest to that time, put together. The Dissenters had the misery of seeing their brethren hung, drawn and quartered. The air of the West was polluted with the stench of their rotting heads and quarters set up in conspicuous places. Hundreds were sold into slavery and deported to the West Indies. Thousands were impoverished by enormous fines. The night was very dark, but day was at hand. The whole land was getting weary of the Stuarts. In 1688, James, abandoned by his courtiers, his clergy, and his army, slunk ignominiously out of the country, and William of Orange was welcomed by the very men, who had insisted on the vanquished Nonconformists declaring that it was not lawful *under any pretence whatever* to take up arms against the King or attempt any change of government either in Church or State. The doctrine of Passive Obedience, so industriously and ridiculously asserted by highly-placed and well-paid divines, broke down utterly; and the Divine Right of Kings to trample on the civil and religious liberties of the people, was heard of no more.

With Williams' accession liberty of worship was assured, and formally granted by the Toleration Act passed in 1689.

The dissenters, who had suffered so much, were not slow to avail themselves of the new condition of things, but began at once building places of worship. In the next twenty-five years, it is calculated that no less than two thousand were built. Most of these were called Presbyterian Meeting-houses. But this hardly accurately described them. It is quite possible that many, both of the ministers and worshippers, would have preferred a Presbyterian form of church-government. But no such organisation was ever in existence in England, except in London, Lancashire, and part of Cheshire, and, even there, it was very imperfect. Whatever the leanings of the members, these so-called Presbyterian churches were, from the necessity of the case or otherwise, practically Congregational or Independent. The name Presbyterian was retained until the Arian controversy arose in 1716 (appendix, p. 424). Since that time it has ceased

to be used, except in the case of a few chapels that are now held by the Unitarians, whose theological teachings bear no similitude to those of the founders.

The modicum of liberty granted by the Toleration Act has been greatly increased in the last two hundred years. The life of the Congregational churches generally, but of Dorset in particular, was greatly enriched, and their activities increased by the Revival of Religion in the last century, as readers of the following pages will see. Wesley came seldom, and did little in Dorset. But contemporaneous with his great work, there was an awakening among the scattered dissenting communities in this county, to which we owe more than we are able to estimate. But it is no part of the purpose of this introduction to sketch the more recent history. Our purpose here has been to show that the churches, whose chequered history and wonderful preservation is told in this book, are the direct product of the Reformation, and to present some few facts that will enable our readers who are members of these churches to see with what a great price their present freedom has been bought.







# THE STORY

OF THE

## Congregational Churches of Dorset.

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### ABBOTSBURY.

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This beautiful, sheltered seaside village, which has a population (1891) of 903, derives its name from the Abbey (St. Peter's), the ruins of which are objects of interest to the visitor; there is a large swannery containing about 1,200 birds, and a wild fowl decoy; the sheet of water inside the Chesil beach ends here, though the beach itself extends further westward; and there are charming gardens belonging to the lord of the manor, in which semi-tropical plants and flowers freely grow, and which, at certain times, are accessible to the public.

There seems to have been a Nonconformist element in this village from an early period, for in June, 1672, a license was taken out for the house of Humphrey Miller as a Congregational meeting place. We can find no evidence of a similar service till towards the close of the eighteenth century. The first regular place of worship was opened Nov. 13th, 1799; in the morning Mr. Lamb (Weymouth) preached from John i. 45, in the afternoon Mr. Saltern (Bridport) from Luke xxiii. 42, and in the evening Mr. Gambole (Sydling) from Luke ii. 25. "There was a crowded audience, and very attentive. A refreshing time from the presence of the Lord was experienced by many. Abbotsbury has been favoured with the gospel for twelve months past, chiefly by brethren from Weymouth, Bridport, and Dorchester, the good

effects of which begin to be very visible, blessed be God.”—*Evangelical Magazine*, 1800, p. 41. The following entries are copied from the Bridport Congregational Church book :

“Nov. 7, 1798.—This day the Church met to take into consideration the state of the people at Abbotsbury, when Mr. James Hart and Mr. George Gollop were deputed by the Church to carry on the worship of God at Abbotsbury next Sabbath.” “Aug. 13, 1799.—The Church met this evening, when Mr. Symes and Mr. James Hart were nominated (with two persons that may be chosen at Dorchester and two at Weymouth), to whom the lease should be given by Mr. Watson, of Abbotsbury, of a house for five years, for the purpose of carrying on the worship of God at Abbotsbury. It was agreed at the same time to unite with Christian friends at Dorchester and Weymouth to put the said house into a convenient form for the worship of God.”

The expense (£31 8s. 1d.) was met by friends at Bridport, Weymouth, and Poole. This, doubtless, was the building the opening of which has been already referred to.

The Weymouth Itinerant Society, formed April, 1846, and consisting of the ministers and deacons of Nicholas Street, Hope, Portland, and Upwey Chapels, supplied Abbotsbury, Chickerell, Portisham, Radipole, and other places. William Devenish, Esq., was appointed treasurer, and Mr. T. Barling secretary. The brethren on the plan about this time were Messrs. Buck, Cook, Richards, J. Barling, H. Smith (Nicholas Street), Clerk, Hodder (Hope Chapel), Beale, Lundie, and Robens (Baptist Chapel) ; the friends belonging to the last-named place had been invited to join in supplying the various stations, and had cheerfully consented. The services at Abbotsbury had been conducted by some of the above-named brethren for many years.

In the autumn of 1847 Mr. J. B. Bishop was appointed to labour in this place and the adjacent villages, the Home Missionary Society making a grant of £30 a year; Mr. Roper, of Bridport, promising an annual donation of £10, the County Association also giving assistance. Mr. Bishop speaks of the place in his journal as “awfully dark, the people ignorant and irreligious ;” but he worked zealously, taking two services on the Sunday at Abbotsbury, walking to preach at Portisham in the afternoon, superintending the Sunday School, and holding a Bible Class ; and though he remained but two years, he was evidently useful in

guiding the feet of many into the way of peace. Previous to this period, the members had been admitted to, and formed part of, the Upwey church, and the ministers of that church were supposed to have the oversight of the Abbotsbury congregation ; the visits of Mr. Le Conteur are spoken of as specially fruitful in good results. By a peaceful arrangement a distinct church was now formed at Abbotsbury. Previous to the removal of Mr. Bishop the attendance had so increased that an enlargement of the chapel was necessary, and £1 a year was paid for additional land. The work was executed by Mr. Dodson, of Weymouth, and the cost speedily met.

Samuel Knell followed Mr. Bishop, but in 1853 he accepted a call from the church at Lyme Regis ; from that period the pulpit has been filled by lay brethren, chiefly from Weymouth.

The chapel, being a rude structure, inconveniently situated, and in a dilapidated condition, it was resolved to erect a new building. Lord Ilchester granted the lease of a plot in a favourable position, at a rental of £1 a year, though with the restriction that there should be no Sunday School. Mr. R. C. Bennett prepared the plans, and the neat, substantial structure was opened Oct. 5th, 1870. The Rev. J. Rogers (Bridport) preached in the afternoon, tea was supplied in a field to about 200 persons, and a public meeting was held in the evening, presided over by K. Damon, Esq., of Weymouth, in which the following ministers took part, Messrs. Neave, Sherren, Rogers, Ashton and Lewis. The Vicar, the Rev. G. H. Penney, who had generously used his influence with Lord Ilchester to grant the site, gave a handsome pulpit bible, and supplied a table at the tea. The people came forward liberally, the deacons, Captain White and Mr. Wallbridge, leading the way, with contributions respectively of £95 and £43 10s., and within a year all the liabilities (£432 6s. 6d) were discharged.

The present deacons are C. Ford, J. Green, and H. J. Gill.

Much good work has been done in the place, and many have gone out from it with true and noble convictions, making them an influence for good, wherever their lot be cast. Though several good supporters have died or removed we trust our friends on the spot will be earnest and watchful, and continue steadfast in their

adherence to the pure and simple truths of New Testament Christianity. D.

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## ALDERHOLT.

This hamlet, like Cripplestyle, Verwood, and Three Cross, in which Congregational Churches exist, belongs to the wide spread Parish of Cranborne, and adjoins the County of Hampshire; it lies about half-a-mile from Daggens Road Station, on the highway to Fordingbridge. Among the licenses for holding divine service, apart from the Church of England, we find the following: "293, a building, Alderholt, in Cranborne, not named, 15th Jan., 1799." Though the denomination is not stated, it is highly probable that the license was taken out by members of the Congregational Church at Fordingbridge, and that the services were conducted by them, as about the same date they obtained licenses for Nonconformist worship in the villages of Godshill and Gorley. There is a tradition at Alderholt that preaching was held in a cottage at the beginning of this century. In 1820 a mud Chapel with a slate roof was erected on the common at Alderholt; this common has since been built on, and roads laid down. Prior to 1820 there does not seem to have been any regular place of worship, except Cripplestyle Chapel, between Fordingbridge and Cranborne. The present building was reared on the old site in 1861, and by the trust deed is committed to the care of the Church at Fordingbridge, the deacons of which are invested with absolute control. The people gave ready assistance in labour and money, according to their ability, and with the kind help of friends around, all the cost was speedily met. Services are conducted Sunday morning and evening, mainly by friends from Fordingbridge, and the present Pastor, the Rev. E. J. Hunt, has the oversight of the little flock and takes a service on each alternate Thursday evening. There is a good Sunday School of 90 children, and a Band of Hope numbering about 100. Thus the word of life is held forth in what would otherwise have been a dark and neglected district. Not a few, coming to the know-

ledge of the truth, have found freedom and gladness, and being blessed of God, have been a blessing to many. D.

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## BEAMINSTER.

Puritanism laid a strong hold on the people of Dorset, especially in the romantic west end of the County. But nowhere have we evidence of that hold being so strong as in the little town of Beaminster. In an account of Archbishop Laud's visitation in 1634, we have, under the head of "A remembrance for the Church of Sarum, in very many necessary particulars," the following noteworthy statement:—"You may please to take notice that in most parishes in Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, and the western partes, there is still a Puritane and an honest man chosen churchwardens together. The Puritane always crosses the other in repayres and adorning the Church, as also in the presentments of unconformities, and in the issue puts some trick or other upon the honest man, to put him to sue for his charges hee hath been at for the Church. You shall find it at this instant in the Parish of Beaminster, in Dorsettschyre, between Crabb and Ellery, the suit now depending.\*" This means that the Puritans were strong enough to elect the people's warden, and prevented the high-church or Laudian party in the Church (the "honest" men) having it all their own way.

Hutchins says that, "The doctrines of the Puritans met with a very favourable reception in this town, insomuch that at the breaking forth of the Rebellion (about 1642) the majority of the townsmen were as violent against the King and hierarchy as, perhaps, any people in the whole Kingdom." He also gives an extract from the Beaminster Poor Book, which gives us a glimpse of Puritan practices in the time of the Commonwealth, "On the 14th May, 1656, there was a solemne ordination of nine ministers in Beaminster Church, where Mr. Stanley Gower (Rector of Holy Trinity), Dorchester, preached, Mr. Ames Short (Rector of),

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\* Report iv. "Historical MSS. Commiss." App. p. 131.



Lyne, prayed, Mr. Jessoppe, of Wimborne, concluded by an exhortation after ordination. The whole worke lasted from half-an-hour past eight till neare eight at afternoon. Seven of the nine ministers were curates; they were ordained each by a separate presbyter, who proposed questions and prayed. Imposition of hands was used by a competent number of presbyters to everyone so ordained. The whole work was performed in a solemn, godly, and orderly way, in a very great assembly of both clergy and laity." This was during the incumbency of the Rev. Joseph Crabb, M.A., who continued to hold the living, and after the Rev. J. Torner's removal, that of the Mother Church of Netherbury also, until he was ejected at the Restoration in 1660. Mr. Crabb afterwards conformed and died Vicar of Axminster. "Though Mr. Crabb was in the Established Church, yet in his preaching and praying he so resembled the Nonconforming ministers that he was still looked upon as one of them. About 1683 he was accused to Dr. Lamphugh, Bishop of Exeter, for neglecting to read prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, and not coming up to the height of conformity; but the Bishop, after he had heard his defence, dismissed him with favour, to the disappointment of his accusers. . . . After the passing of the Act of Uniformity (1662) a dissenting congregation was formed at Beaminster, in which Mr. Crabb undoubtedly had a share." He died in 1699, and was buried in Beaminster. The services were held in the house of Mr. Lancelot Cox, and the worshippers numbered about 100, described as "People unknown, from London and places distant.\*"

It does not appear that Mr. Crabb ever resided at Beaminster as minister of this congregation. That work was taken up by another clergyman, the Rev. Thomas Crane, M.A., who had been ejected from the valuable Rectory of Rampisham, to which he had been appointed by Oliver Cromwell when the Rev. Francis Bampffield vacated it to become Vicar of Sherborne. What is now known about Mr. Crane can be put into few words. He was a native of Plymouth, where his father was a merchant, and

\*Codices Manuscripti Tenisoniani. 639-926. Archbp's. Lby, Lambeth, 1669.

where he was born in 1631. He was educated at Exeter College, Oxford. Before coming to Rampisham he had been assistant to the Rev. Richard Allein (? at Ditchett, Somerset) and married the daughter of the Rev. William Lyford, B.D., Vicar of Sherborne. He was a studious, conscientious man, possessed of great zeal, but with a due mixture of charity, of a retiring disposition and fond of solitude. A curious story is told by Calamy of how "he was once indicted at the Sessions at Bridport, where he was publicly charged with *coming* to divine service, etc., the word *not* being omitted, which caused the indictment to be dismissed, so that he escaped. From the known character of the officer concerned, it was plain that this was not the fruit of design to do him service (a hint that sometimes officials who were charged with the duty of prosecuting Nonconformists, hated the work, and intentionally made slips of this kind) it could be imputed to nothing but the interposition of that Providence in his favour, the honour of which he had so earnestly studied and endeavoured to promote. For he was so great an observer of the steps of Divine Providence towards himself, and so frequent in his remarks thereon that he was commonly called *Providence*." He preached at first, no doubt, in his own house, in the house of Mr. Cox, and elsewhere, and remained at Beaminster until his death in 1714. During this period he must have had many striking illustrations of God's wonderful care of his own people. The record of one of them, as remarkable as it is interesting, has been preserved to us, and the memory of it is perpetuated by a tablet placed on the wall of the Chapel, behind the pulpit. When the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth,\* landed at Lyme Regis, in June, 1685, he was joined by some of the members of the Church of which Mr. Crane was Pastor. Among these was a lawyer named Mr. James Daniel. He marched with the army through Axminster, where he may have visited his old friend the Vicar, Mr. Crabb, and eventually was in the fatal Sedgmoor fight. When it was evident that all was lost, save honour, and Kirke's lambs were pursuing and butchering the wretched fugitives, Mr. Daniel made

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\* See Lyme Regis for fuller account.

good his escape and got clear away home to his own house at Beaminster. Here he was unmolested for a time. But a price was set on the head of every Monmouth's man, and in a case like his, a large price. One night as he lay in bed he heard, or thought he heard, a voice, which he took to be a voice from heaven, bidding him rise and dress and leave his house, going in a westerley direction. He at once obeyed, and had scarcely got, clear of the place, when the house was surrounded by troopers come to seek him. They searched, but in vain. As they were on the point of departing, using much of that strong language for which they were notorious, somebody, probably the original informer, suggested that if they would ride over a few fields to a lonely barn that belonged to Mr. Daniel, they might find him. They went, some guarded the door and others entered. Nothing was visible inside but some straw, under which they thought it possible that he might have, as in fact he had, crept. But how should these impatient soldiers look for him? They decided to do this—to take their swords and stab through the straw in every direction and “if the rogue be here we shall prick him and he'll cry out.” They began. He would, we may be sure, be an interested though an unwilling listener. He heard the swords come down, at first a little way off, then come nearer, until they were close to him. He held his breath, down came a sword close to his body, now almost grazing his hands, now close to his face—they were very near pricking him—they cut some of his clothes but they did not touch him. Lying still, he heard them depart, cursing the informant who had given them this bootless search. After a time he crept out and went home, where he lived unmolested, perhaps forgotten in the turmoil of the times, until three years after, when, the English people having had enough of the Stuarts, William came, and with him liberty of conscience. He lived for many years after and died honoured in his 100th year in 1711. Before his death he directed that he should be buried on the site of that barn—the scene of his great deliverance. The barn was accordingly demolished and there he was buried, and there his descendants have been buried for eight generations. It is the burial ground of the Daniels of Beaminster to this day.



No wonder that the minister was often speaking of God's Providence!

Mr. Crane seems to have been occasionally assisted by the Rev. John Torner, another ejected minister, whom the Act of Uniformity had deprived of the living of North Cricket, in Somerset. After a chequered history, in which he had been chaplain to a regiment during the civil war; then associated with Joseph Allein, and with him imprisoned at Ilchester for five years, during which time he preached through the grating of his prison to the people outside, and so enraged his gaoler that he attempted to shoot him; he found his way down into this neighbourhood, and preached as opportunity offered. Calamy says that he had a stentorian voice, so powerful that when he visited E. Prideaux, Esq., M.P., at Ford Abbey, the services were held in the cellar, for greater safety.

We can imagine these good men, and others like them, meeting together and consulting about the affairs of the church and nation—the gentle retiring Crane, the bull-voiced Torner, the mild kindly-hearted Crabb, and the sturdy Daniel—how they encouraged one another in times of peril and persecution, and, when the clouds rolled by, how they rejoiced together.

It appears that from about the year 1687, Mr. Crane had associated with him as colleague, the Rev. Thomas Hoar, a native of Hawkchurch, who was ordained with seven other ministers at Lyme Regis, August 25th, 1687; the Rev. Ames Short, of Lyme, and Mr. Crane taking part in the service. On the death of his friend and fellow-worker, the founder of the church, in 1714, he succeeded to the sole charge, and carried on the work until his death, in or about 1723. In addition to his pastoral duties he "had several young gentlemen at a time in his house, to whom he taught the classics, and prepared them for the higher seminaries of learning." He is said to have been greatly esteemed for his piety and learning by all his acquaintances. "But his wife, as a perfect Xantippe dictated to him in all his undertakings."\* He was succeeded by a young minister, the Rev. John England, son

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\* Letter of Barth. Hoare, Masbury, Jan. 10, 1757, in "Monthly Repository," vii., 283.

and assistant of the Rev. John England, of Sherborne. His father dying in 1722, he soon after received and accepted a call to Beaminster, where he laboured until 1736. About this time, the Rev. Robert Drewitt, who had been minister of the church at Bridport, and would consequently be known to the people, came unexpectedly to live in the town. He had removed from Bridport to Taunton in 1737, but his health failing him there he was obliged to remove, and came to Beaminster, where he appears to have occupied the pulpit until his death, in the following year. In 1738, the Rev. Josiah Bradshaw, probably a relative of the Rev. Matthew Bradshaw, of Kidderminster, settled here and was ordained, with three other ministers, at Bridport, September 26th, 1738. After about eight years' ministry here he removed to Stratford, London, in 1745. In the same year the Rev. John Bryant, of Uppingham, Rutland, accepted an invitation to become the pastor. That his predecessors, about the details of whose work we unfortunately know so little, had not laboured in vain, is shown by the fact, preserved in the Walter Wilson MSS., in Dr. Williams' library, that "at the time of his settlement he had about 200 people, consisting without exception of all the principal people in the town." He remained thirty years. Four years after he entered upon his work the people rose up and built themselves a new chapel, and were at work upon it at the same time that the people at Lyme Regis were engaged in building the fine old meeting-house which is with us still. Further than this the history of Mr. Bryant's pastorate is a blank. In the MS. above quoted, there is a mysterious reference to its conclusion, "he was dismissed on account of his son's marriage." Behind these few words there is evidently a tale, but a tale which we shall now probably never recover. If the church records had not been burnt, as we shall presently see they were, we might have had some light upon it. After he ceased to be minister at Beaminster he preached to a small congregation at Winsham, but continued his residence here until his death, April 24th, 1777. The next minister was the Rev. Samuel Fawcett, lately a student of the college at Daventry, and son of the Rev. Benjamin Fawcett, M.A., of Kidderminster, of whom Wesley writes in his Journal, Feb. 1771,

‘ I had the pleasure of spending an hour at Kidderminster with that good man Mr. Fawcett.’ He was ordained June 26th, 1776, and remained here until 1790. His orthodoxy was suspected at the time of his settlement, and one good minister openly refused to sanction his ordination by being present. Subsequent events proved this good man’s judgment to be correct. Mr. Fawcett gradually abandoned evangelical sentiments, adopting first Arian, and then Socinian, or Unitarian opinions. His position at length became untenable. The influence of the great Evangelical Revival was felt at Beaminster, at that time one of the most progressive little towns in the kingdom. He resigned his now unpleasant position with the intention of abandoning the ministry, and retired to Bridport, where Hunter says “he became a banker.” In 1801 he became minister of the Unitarian congregation in Yeovil, which he resigned in 1816, and died at Yeovil December 14th, 1835,\* aged 81. “I remember finding him,” says Hunter, “living near that town in a handsome house about 1816.” During his ministry that calamity, which had twice before befallen the little town (in 1644 and in 1684, when the town was entirely destroyed) was repeated. On “31st March, 1781, between the hours of four and five o’clock in the morning, a fire broke out in a back building belonging to the King’s Arms Inn, in the market-place. In the course of three or four hours all the houses on the west side of the street leading from the market-place to the church (two only excepted), were destroyed. At the same time two houses near the pound, with the schoolhouse and several houses near the almshouses, together with all the houses in Little Street, were entirely consumed.” “This awful visitation of Divine Providence,” says the Church Book, “destroyed the writings and other records belonging to the Protestant Dissenting congregation, then in the care of the late James Daniel, Gent. Many particulars of this history, both useful and interesting are, of course, irrevocably lost.” But the chapel escaped.

The Rev. Robert Anlezack, who came from Corsham, followed, but only remained about a year, and afterwards conformed to the

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\* For more complete account see Dictionary National Biography, Article, “Benj. Fawcett;” *Christian Reformer*, 1836, p. 61.

Established Church. He was succeeded in 1791 by the Rev. Thomas Thomas, of Broadway, near Ilminster. After a three years' ministry, which left no apparent mark on the church, he removed to Enfield, and thence to Wareham. In the year 1794, the Rev. Richard Taprell, then of South Molton, became pastor. He had been happily settled for over two years, when, at the pressing request of his old congregation, he returned to South Molton. The church was not long without a pastor, for as soon as Mr. Taprell left, the people, at the suggestion of Mr. Hine, one of the deacons, invited the Rev. John Rogers, of Stratford-on-Avon, son of the Rev. John Rogers, of Southwark, whom they had four years before unsuccessfully asked to be their minister, to come and preach once more. Here, in passing, it may interest some to have a suggestion as to how churches, in remote parts of the country, heard of ministers hundreds of miles away, and came into contact with them, in these old days before railways, telegraphs, or even the penny post was thought of. The church book says that Mr. Hine was travelling for business purposes (there was then a flourishing linen-cloth manufacture in Beaminster) in the Midlands, when he happened to hear Mr. Rogers preach, and got to know also that a change of pastorate would not be unwelcome to him. Mr. Rogers paid a visit of two months, at the end of which time he was cordially invited to stay, and did so. "Our ministerial salary," they said, "at present, will be £60, usually paid quarterly, together with £10, or 10 guineas, which has for some years past been paid annually by the bounty of some distant friends." On July 12th, 1797, Mr. Rogers was ordained. The *Evangelical Magazine*, in reporting what took place, says, "Beaminster has been in past years under that sort of preaching that has emptied many places of worship in the West of England." The allusion is, of course, to the dry Arianism of the times. Mr. Rogers was of a different spirit, and at once began to organise prayer-meetings—at first in his own house, and then in the chapel. In 1798 a church covenant was entered into, which we should be pleased to set out at large, did space permit. In the same year the minister and Mr. Hine succeeded in suppressing a public butcher's market, which had been openly held in the square on Sundays

for more than fifty years, but not without incurring a good deal of ill-will in some quarters. In 1803, in anticipation of the meeting of the Dorset Association of Congregational Churches, which was held here in that year, "the pulpit and doors of the chapel were painted for the first time"—not surely before they needed it. In 1805 preaching was commenced at Stoke Abbot.\* In 1807, the Sunday School, which appears to have been unsuccessfully started at an earlier date, was re established under more promising conditions. A room, next the chapel, was rented at sixteen shillings a year; and the widow Larcombe was engaged to do the teaching, at a salary of two guineas a year. The money being guaranteed failure was now, of course, impossible! In 1809 the church received a sum of £50, left by Mrs. Elizabeth Collins, who died in 1805. Mr. Rogers was a good earnest man, but seems to have allowed little things to unduly trouble and depress him. Feeling that his work was done here, he resigned his charge, and left to become pastor of the church at Tisbury, Wilts, June 10th, 1810, and there he died in 1815.

On July 9th, 1811, the Rev. William Judson, of Plymouth Dock, was invited, and settled soon after. In the letter inviting him he is promised a salary of one hundred guineas a year, free of taxes, and a house. This seems to show that Mr. Rogers had not laboured in vain, and that the linen trade and other industries of the town were in a flourishing condition. This appears to be the financial high-water mark in the records of this church. Much of the prosperity was no doubt due to the zealous and unstinting efforts made by one of the deacons (officers to whom congregational churches everywhere owe more than is usually acknowledged), who bore a name long and honourably and still associated with the church—Mr. Richard Hine, a linen manufacturer—whose name comes up in connection with every good work in his time, which extended over sixty years of service. Among the other things he did, he in 1798 fitted up a building on his property, in his native village of Powerstock, as a place of worship, and here services were regularly carried on for more than

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\* For details see under Stoke Abbot.



fifty years. They have now ceased. Mr. Hine himself frequently preached here and in the surrounding villages, extending his labours as far as Abbotsbury. He died April 2nd, 1844.\*

For fourteen years there is no entry in the church-book. Mr. Judson left September 19th, 1812, and soon after settled at High Wycombe, where he remained thirty-five years. On his retirement the church at High Wycombe showed its sense of the value of his services by voting him an annuity of £100, which was paid to his death in 1851. There is no record of the appointment of his successor, the Rev. J. Moore, who was certainly here from 1815 to Feb. 1825.† He was succeeded by the Rev. John Bowdon Simper, from Stalbridge, in June, 1825. Shortly after we meet with the name of R. Conway, who later on, in 1840, became one of the deacons. He was the father of the late Rev. Samuel Conway, B.A., of Walthamstow, and a benefactor to the churches at Stoke Abbot and Waytown.

In 1826 a new chapel was opened.

In April, 1828, the Rev. A. Bishop, of Ringwood, accepted an invitation to settle on a salary of £105 to £110. Mr. Bishop was the son of the Rev. William Evans Bishop, and grandson of the Rev. Thos. Bishop. He was born at Lewes and educated at Homerton, where he completed his college course with distinction in 1807, and settled at Ringwood. To him the chapel owes its first organ, which he placed there partly to afford occupation to a son of musical tastes, but otherwise of weak intellect. He was a popular preacher, and in great request on special occasions. Leaving Beaminster, midsummer 1855, he retired to Tunbridge Wells, where he died January 15th, 1875. During his ministry of twenty-seven years he never wrote a line in the church-book. He was succeeded by the Rev. G. Waterman, M.A., a native of the U.S.A., educated under Dr. Lyman Beecher. He found the church in a weaker state than it had been in for many years, partly, no doubt, because by this time the manufacturing trade had entirely left the town and neighbourhood. He retired dis-

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\* Memoir in "Christian Witness," 1844, p. 260.

† Minutes of Dorset Association, vol. 1. *Evangelical Magazine*, 1815, p. 548. Broadwinsor Minutes.

couraged in 1857. The next minister, the Rev. John Cook Westbrook, came from Redburne, Herts, in 1858, but owing partly to failing health, but more because his mind became unsettled on the question of infant baptism, he retired at the beginning of the following year, never taking another charge. He died at Sandown, Isle of Wight, 1879, aged 62.

The church was now so reduced financially that it remained for some time without a pastor, or the prospect of being able to obtain one, unless help came from some quarter. It was accordingly decided to appeal to the Home Missionary Society for that help. But the decision cost the church the services of the junior deacon, who could not "see it to be right to give up the old place of worship to any society, however excellent, or receive their pecuniary assistance." We honour the good man, though we may think he was mistaken.

The Home Missionary Society arranged with the Rev. John Thomson, late of Aberdeen, to come and attempt to raise the cause. He arrived in January, 1860, and the marked change that speedily followed, showed that the directors had been wisely guided in their choice. The congregations increased, prayer-meetings were revived. His seriousness of purpose, his conscientiousness, his high ideal of the Christian life, his firm hold of the truths of the Gospel, and his clear and vigorous preaching, all told. On September 25th, 1863, the church, which seems to have disappeared in the troublous times, was formed again with 39 members. The finances reflected the change, and it appeared that by means of the Weekly Offering now introduced, £80 a year would be raised. Considerations of health, and the need of rest and a warm climate, had led Mr. Thompson, who was fitted for a larger sphere, to accept this charge. But the financial sacrifice involved could not be long continued, and in July, 1864, he accepted an invitation from the church at Lightcliffe, Yorks, whence he removed to Guernsey in 1880, where he died in 1885.

The Rev. T. Neave, of Perth, followed, and for four years worked happily and successfully. He removed, in 1869, to Dorchester. His successor was the Rev. Peter Johnson, B.A., from Appledore, Devon. He resigned in 1872, and removed to

Barnstaple, where he resided for some years without pastoral charge. The reason assigned for his leaving was that he found it impossible to get a house to live in, in the town.

After an interval of upwards of a year, the Rev. U. B. Randall, M.A., of Guernsey, accepted an invitation to become the pastor, and settled December, 1873. There followed nearly seventeen years of quiet, steady, happy, and useful work. The church had rest, and walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was edified and multiplied. In 1877 it was resolved to completely transform the interior of the chapel. Previously it had been gloomy in the extreme, but when re-opened in 1878 it had become bright and attractive. The organ had also been greatly improved. The total cost was £280. In this year Mr. Randall married a daughter of the late Rev. S. Spink, formerly of Wimborne. The school was renovated in 1886. Early in 1889 the pastor announced his intention of resigning his charge, and retiring at an early date; and though the people did all they could to persuade him to remain, he resigned in December, and left in March, 1890.

The Rev. W. A. Bevan, formerly of Crediton, settled in 1890, and removed to Zion Chapel, Portsmouth, in 1895, and was succeeded by the Rev. F. Coram, who had just completed his studies at the Western College. He was ordained September 24th, 1896, on which occasion the chapel was re-opened, after being re-painted and repaired. O.

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## BERE REGIS.

This little town, the "Kingsbere" of Hardy's stories, has suffered a serious decline in trade and population on account of its distance from a railway station, and from the agricultural depression. In the old coaching days, being on the highway westward from Portsmouth and Southampton, it must have been a somewhat lively place. It is, perhaps, best known by its annual fair on Woodbury Hill (an ancient British fortress), which was at one time among the largest in the country. The second part of



the name implies some connection with royalty ; anyhow there is evidence to show that Queen Elfrida, step mother of Edward the Martyr, and King John, resided here for a time. The population has declined from 1366 in 1871, to 1141 in 1891.

Nonconformity in this place must be traced to the preaching and influence of the Rev. Philip Lamb, who was ejected from the parish church in 1662. Born at Cerne Abbas, of which his father was minister, and educated at Cambridge, Mr. Lamb began his work at Bere Regis when about twenty-one years of age. He seems to have been very zealous, preaching at Kingston as well as Bere, and at the latter place holding a service every day in the week at six o'clock in the morning. He took as a farewell text John 14, 23. The following are the only references made to the occasion.—“ I must now tell you that perhaps you may not see my face, or hear my voice, any more in this place ; yet not out of any peevish humour or disaffection to the present authority of the kingdom, it being my practice and counsel to you all to fear God and honour the King ; but rather a real disaffection in some particulars imposed, to which my conscience cannot yet be espoused . . . . I shall only add this, my friends, that though my lips be sealed up, so that I may not speak from God *to* you, yet I shall not cease to speak to God *for* you, as ever I have done.” He had secured a large place in the affections of the people, and there was much lamentation when he was silenced. He continued to preach privately as opportunity offered, but was at last driven to Morden, where he held service and kept days of prayer in private, to the great benefit and comfort of many. In 1669 Mr. Lamb was residing at Alton Pancras. On May 1st, 1672, he took out a license to be “ a Congregational teacher in East Morden, Dorsett,” and his own house was licensed as a congregational meeting place the same day. When more freedom was allowed a convenient meeting house was provided for him at Kingston. The people flocked from all parts to hear him, and many were quickened by his ministry. But persecution compelled him, with his family, to flee to London, and he became pastor of a congregation at Clapham, where he died March 25th, 1689, at the age of 67. “ He was offered £600 a-year if he would have

conformed ; but this did not tempt him. He was remarkable for his unaffected piety, cheerful temper, and engaging deportment.”\* Mr. Lamb published several funeral sermons, but no work of any importance.

It should be remembered that several gentlemen in this part of the country were in hearty sympathy with the struggle for religious and civil liberty, among whom may be mentioned Sir Thomas Trenchard, of Lytchett Matravers, and Sir Walter Erle, of Charborough Park, the owner of nearly all the land in Bere Regis. In the year 1780 Thomas Erle Drax, Esq., erected a stone over the ice-house, a little to the north of the mansion, in Charborough Park, with this inscription :—“ Under this roof, in the year 1686, a set of patriotic gentlemen of this neighbourhood concerted the great plan of the glorious Revolution, with the immortal King William, to whom we owe our deliverance from Popery and slavery, and the expulsion of the tyrant race of Stuarts ; the restoration of our liberty, the security of our property, and the establishment of national honour. Englishmen ! remember this glorious era, and consider that your liberties, procured by the virtues of your ancestors, must be maintained by yourselves !”

We learn from Hutchins that “ Lady Trenchard appears to have been an eminently pious woman ; she sometimes attended the meeting-house at Wimborne, and sometimes that of Bere Regis, till she died.” The husband, Sir John, was the friend and adviser of William III., and a Secretary of State. He died 1695, and was buried at Bloxworth.

The church records for the 18th century have unfortunately been lost or destroyed, but with the aid of the Hunter MSS. (British Museum), and the Walter Wilson MSS. (Dr. Williams' Library), we have been able to piece the story together, though somewhat imperfectly.

“ It is said that the Dissenting interest in this place owes its origin to six ministers who preached in rotation once a fortnight, viz., Mr. Wheeler, from Swanage ; Mr. Clifford, from Wimborne ; Mr. Poole (Powell), from Blandford, and others from other places.

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\*See Calamy's Memorial, vol. 2, p. 115.

But all that we know with any certainty is that Mr. Bulstrode was settled here before the year 1670, who it is thought was the first minister settled with them for any time. Mr. Webber succeeded him, but continued for a short time only. Mr. Clarke, of Wareham, about this time began a lecture, which he kept up many years, on a Wednesday, once a fortnight, till Mr. Copplestone settled here.”\*

We can find no certain information about Mr. Bulstrode, and the name does not occur on the list of ejected ministers in Calamy's Memorial. (There was a John Bulstrode at Milborne Port 1727-1732, and a Samuel Bulstrode at South Petherton in 1715.) In 1715 John Copplestone was minister. He was also pastor at Netherbury, Swanage, and Compton; but he remained only for a brief period in either place. In 1715 there was also a Baptist cause, and John Webber was at one time minister; but whether he was the Mr. Webber previously mentioned, or any relation to him, we cannot say. The Baptists continued for some years; a license was taken out for the “Dwelling-house of Grace Pitman, Anabaptist, 15th January, 1740,” but they had disappeared in the returns of 1773. Mr. Copplestone was succeeded by Mr. John Waldron, who after about seven years removed to Ringwood. Luke Filmore followed for three or four years. There was a Luke Filmore minister at Wick lane, near Bath, probably the same person, as the name is very uncommon.

Thomas Coad became pastor in 1738, and is said to have remained about eight years; but probably it was not at all so long; he may have returned after his successor had departed. He went to Dorking in 1746, and died there 1750. A tablet is erected to his memory in the chapel in which he ministered. He was the son of Thomas Coad, “the God-fearing carpenter” of Stoford, near Yeovil, whose connection with the Monmouth Rebellion, and banishment to the plantations in Jamaica, is graphically described by Pulman.† The record of his experiences was found in the trunk of a descendant, at her decease, near Winchester, in 1808, and fortunately came under the notice of

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\* Hunter MSS.

† Rambles by John Trotandot, p. 195.

Macauley, who refers to it in his History. Thomas Coad, jun., was educated under Mr. Grove, of Taunton. At one time we find him associated with Messrs. Banger and J. Copplestone in conducting services at Long Bredy. "His desire was that his death might be improved, but that his character should be referred to the Judgment Day, when free from the partiality of friendship or censure of ill-will, it would appear without disguise."† Mr. Coad received in 1740 a grant of £6 from the Congregational Fund Board. Jacob Chapman followed, but did not remain long.

John Waldron resigned his charge at Ringwood on account of some dissatisfaction and uneasiness concerning a lawsuit, and resumed the pastorate of Bere Regis about 1746, which he held for 14 years, still, however, continuing to reside at Ringwood. He died 1763. Matthew Jackson followed for about three years, and to him succeeded Mr. Lloyd for about four years. David Jones seems to have been pastor from 1769-1773. At this period "The number of hearers in the forenoon does not exceed 50 on an average, and in the afternoon from 120 to 140, though some suppose they must be near 200."

Mrs. Barbara Skinner, of London, who died December, 1769, gave by will the sum of £500 for the benefit of the minister of the Meeting House, and this is now represented by £660 in consols. She also bequeathed £200 to the Dissenting poor of Bere Regis, to be disposed of at the discretion of her Executor, Geo. Brough, Esq., late Treasurer of Guy's Hospital. This sum was distributed, at various times, to the class for whom it was intended. It seems unfortunate that it was not invested so as to be of permanent advantage.

Mr. Rogers appears to have been pastor from 1773-7, and James Holt followed 1787-9. He was educated at Homerton. After leaving Bere Regis he became assistant to Mr. Wilkins at Weymouth, but subsequently adopted Unitarian opinions. He was at Crediton from 1799-1803.

Benjamin Howell settled here in 1791. He was educated at Carmarthen, removed in 1807 from Bere Regis to Ringwood, and from thence to Thornbury. There is little doubt that his

† Walter Wilson, MSS., "Account of Dissenting Ministers and Churches."

sympathies were in the Arian direction, for in 1807 he took part in the ordination of Mr. Seaward, Unitarian minister at Poole, and to him the following paragraph must refer.

The father of the late Dr. Halley came South; was head-gardener to a gentleman in the neighbourhood, and found his way to the Presbyterian Meeting House. "Brought up a strict Anti-Burgher, he was puzzled by the prayers and sermons of the minister, an Arian, who eschewed doctrine and preached a mild form of Christian morality; but he was shewn into the square pew of the principal tradesman of the town, Mr. Bellows, and somehow or another tolerated the lack of doctrine, and the exaltation of works, as often as good Mr. Bellows was willing to give him a seat in the square pew. The result was Miss Bellows became Mrs. Halley." Mr. Halley removed from Bere Regis to Blackheath, and there his four children were born. "On the death of his mother, Robert (the eldest, born 1796), when he was quite a child, was sent into Dorsetshire, to reside for a time, with his maternal uncle at Bere Regis. There he was sent to the school of a clergyman in the town, a somewhat severe master, and under him gained a knowledge of the rudiments of Latin."\* Mr. Howell seems to have given satisfaction to the Congregational Fund Board as to his doctrinal opinions, and in the earlier years of his ministry at Bere, received a grant of £6 per annum. At the close of Mr. Howell's ministry in 1807 the subscribers were as follows:—John King; William, Samuel, and Robert Bellows; Thomas, Henry, Giles, and George Homer; Mrs. and J. Burgess; Messrs. Sheppard, Kingsbury, Lamb, Gallop, Best, Sanders, and J. Saunders, Jno. Welch, Henry Bartlett, William and Joseph Clench, G. Manuell, T. Gould, Jno. Shave, Jno. Battrick, Joseph Symonds; Misses Homer, Mate, and K——; and A. and M. Coles. The stipend was a little over £40 a year, a considerable advance on previous years, and to this must be added the dividend on Mrs. Skinner's bequest (£16 4s. od.). Mr. W. Bellows had filled the office of Treasurer up to the end of 1806, and was succeeded by Mr. Thomas Homer.

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\* Biography of Robert Halley, D.D.



Ambrose Garrett settled in 1808. After awhile dissention arose, probably the minister's orthodoxy was suspected, for Arianism was rife ; a dissatisfied section withdrew and built a new place of worship, which was opened July 9th, 1813, Dr. Simpson (Hoxton Academy) preaching in the morning from Phil. i., 6 ; Rev. Mr. Hooper (Hoxton) in the afternoon from Isaiah lii., 7 ; and Dr. Cracknell in the evening from 2 Cor. ii., 15-6. John King, who had been the chief supporter of the old meeting, was among the seceders, and whilst on his death bed, gave £300 to the building fund. Mr. King also gave the communion cup still in use, which bears the inscription, "The gift of John King to the Communicant Dissenters of Bere Regis, 1802." William Laxon was the first minister of the new place. He was educated at Hoxton, and left Bere in 1817 to minister to a Church in Guernsey, where he died, 1857. "He was a devoted and diligent minister, universally beloved and esteemed." John Gay followed the same year, and was ordained in November. "The services were interesting and impressive. The prospects are pleasing and truly encouraging." In October, 1817, a Church was formed consisting of Thomas Gould, Elizabeth Homer, Bethiah Stickland, Susanna Gay, Susanna Northover, Mary Gould, Thomas Lockyer, Elizabeth Cousins, and Mrs. Lamb, and this was the covenant entered into : "We, whose names are hereunto annexed, do agree to form ourselves into a Christian Church of the Congregational order, in obedience to Christ the great Head of the Church, for our mutual edification and the glory of Christ." On July 17th, 1820, the two congregations were formally and happily united. "Mr. Garrett then gave in his resignation as pastor of the old meeting, and Mr. Homer who represented that Church, stated it as the unanimous desire of the members to be united to the New Church under the care of the Rev. J. Gay ; and Mr. Gould, on the part of Mr. Gay's Church, signified the cordial concurrence in the union. After these mutual declarations of love and union, Dr. Cracknell delivered an appropriate sermon from 2 Thes. iii., 1.\*" A debt somehow had accumulated of £200, which the

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\* Church Records.



united people proceeded forthwith to discharge. Mr. Garrett, who had married Miss Homer, went to America.

Our information as to the earlier place of meeting for worship is very limited. The first license we can find is as follows: "65, house called Leckyers, Bere Regis, Presbyterians, 10th July, 1711;" and a second runs thus: "86, house of Mary Batrix, widow, Bere Regis, Presbyterian, 10th January, 1721."

In a lease dated November 14th, 1751, reference is made to a previous lease by which the Dissenters Meeting House and its appurtenances is granted to John Mate on the lives of his son, John Mate, and Thomas Brabant, son of Susannah Pearce, widow, of Bere Regis, but the date is not given; there was probably a lease prior to this. As already stated, Lady Trenchard sometimes attended the Meeting House at Wimborne, and sometimes that at Bere Regis till she died; no doubt the Meeting House in Blind Street had been built some years before her decease in 1743.

By the lease of 1751 the Meeting House is granted to John Mate, of Bere Regis, yeoman. on the payment of 40/-, and a yearly rent of 2/-, for the life of Joseph Manuel the younger, son of Joseph Manuel, Bloxworth, gentleman. By a deed dated July 3rd, 1799, the Meeting house is leased to Rob. Burgess, gentleman; Wm. Bellows, shopkeeper; and Wm. Mate, Sen., husbandman, for the lives of James Burgess, George Bellows, and John Mate; the fine on this occasion was £10, and the yearly rent as before. Since the union of the two congregations in 1820, the Blind Street Meeting has ceased to be a place of worship, and is now a dwelling house.

Charles Greenway, from Hoxton Academy, became pastor in 1825, and was ordained the same year, an impressive charge to the minister being delivered by the Rev. J. A. James of Birmingham, from 1 Tim., iv., 6. Thomas Burgess Barker came from Highbury College to be minister in 1827, but did not remain long; in 1829 the Chapel was rebuilt, and he preached at the opening service.\*

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\* See Memoir Congregational Year Book, 1882.

Henry Stroud, from Homerton College, became pastor in 1830, remaining till 1844. He kept a school for several years and then had charge for some time of the Church at Lytchett Minster. He died in the hospital at Milton Abbey, August, 1879, and was buried at Bere Regis. Mr. Stroud was a man of high character and considerable ability; he is affectionately remembered by his pupils.

Alfred Crisp followed for a short period, and died in Guernsey, 1867.

William Foster, from Westerham, Kent, accepted a call in 1846, but died suddenly in 1850, and was buried in the churchyard.

J. Edwin took charge from 1850 till 1853, and was succeeded by James Wood, who removed to Heytesbury, Wilts, in 1856.

George Compton Smith, M.A., from Lancashire College, became pastor July 1857, and was ordained the following November, Dr. Halley giving the charge to the young minister from Rev. ii., 10, "eloquent, affectionate and deeply solemn"; the Rev. E. R. Conder, M.A. (Poole) preaching to the people. In 1859 the weekly offering was introduced and proved a great success, increasing the stipend 25 per cent. In 1866 a harmonium was purchased for use at the services, and was paid for by Messrs. Nott, Wood, Saunders and Homer, in equal proportions. In 1869 the question of erecting a new Chapel was seriously considered, and promises (unsolicited) were made to the extent of £260, but a suitable spot could not be obtained. When a site had been definitely refused, and it seemed as if the people would be deprived of a place for public worship, Mr. Wood authorised Mr. Smith to acquire at any cost, and at his sole expense, the one bit of freehold in the place, on which a Chapel and Manse could be erected, and which belonged to a Wareham tradesman; this was effected through the wise and kind assistance of Mr. James Tuck of Wareham. On the site thus secured a substantial schoolroom was built, costing upwards of £400, which was opened free of debt. On June 7th, 1869, a meeting was held to bid farewell to the valued pastor, Mr. G. W. Homer in the chair. Mr. T. A. Homer presented a purse containing

£30, as a token of the esteem and affection of the people. Addresses, expressive of high appreciation and deep regret, were given by Messrs. Mundell, Saunders, and Homer, and brethren from the church at Poole. During Mr. Smith's Ministry of 12 years, the little church was strong, prosperous and active, as it had never been before, and embraced several families of good position; mention may be made of George James Wood, Athelhampton Hall, and Thomas Nott, M.D. (deacons); T. A. Homer, Tolpuddle, and J. H. Mundell (chosen deacons, 1868); Wm. and Jno. Scutt, Samuel and Miss Dowden (Roke), J. C. Saunders, Henry Aldridge (Pallington), and J. Boyt (Affpuddle). Mr. Smith expressed his conviction that for "the last 60 years the strength of the church has depended, to an unusual extent, on the godly life and devout services of faithful women." In 1897 he became pastor of a church at Rhynie, in Aberdeenshire.

John Constance, from the Bristol Institute, filled the pulpit from December, 1869, to April, 1871.

William Barwell, educated also at the Bristol Institute, who had laboured as an Evangelist at Waytown for three years, became pastor, July, 1871, and was ordained the following December. At the end of 1874 he removed to Cheltenham, and presided over a school for the education of boys: "he was highly esteemed by all who knew him, as a man of honourable life and conduct, and a genuine servant of Jesus Christ." In March, 1872, the Church was greatly cheered by the addition of seven persons to their fellowship. The Chapel fell into hand this year on the decease of the last life; after lengthened negotiations the building was let to the congregation at a rental of £5 per annum. A strong feeling existed in favour of a new Chapel, and C. J. Mansel-Pleydell, Esq., most kindly offered a site, but it was deemed wise to remain in the old place for the present, and to put it in a good state of repair, the cost of which about £35. John Rose Fuller Ross filled the pastorate from 1874 to 1876, and Thomas Simm followed in 1878, removing to Petersfield in 1882. Mr. J. H. Mundell, who had shewn himself a true friend of the cause for half a century, and who, though of late years residing near Bournemouth, spent his Sundays mostly at Bere,

superintending the Sunday School, &c., took steps about 1877 to build a Manse, the need of which had been greatly felt, and by his liberality and unwearied effort, the work was accomplished, and the entire cost (£400) defrayed.

Mr J. C Saunders, who had married the widow of a former pastor, William Foster, and had acted as Treasurer for many years, died January 3rd, 1880, bequeathing £100 (£10 a year for 10 years) to the minister for the time being.

Mr. Ross returned in 1882, remaining till 1886. He had been brought up in the Church of England, but a change taking place in his views upon some matters relating to the doctrine and discipline of that Church, he, at the cost of much trouble of mind, came out from it, and joined the Congregationalists in 1854, filling various pastorates in this County and elsewhere. He was a gentle spirited man, cultured and unassuming, faithful in his work and devoted to his master; his last days were spent at Iliracombe, where he died, March, 1892.

Alfred Goodall, from Hackney College, became pastor in January, 1887, and left for a larger sphere at Ongar in 1891. Mr. and Mrs. Goodall were held in high esteem, and rendered good service amid somewhat trying conditions.

Edwin Mansfield Potter entered on the pastoral work January, 1892, and accepted a call from Goring-on-Thames at the close of 1896.

The members were much exercised as to the tenure on which the chapel was held, and after sundry disappointments, they finally resolved to convert into a place of worship the School-room in Butt Lane, which had been secured by the foresight and liberality of Mr. Wood. The enlargement and fitting up of the room was contracted for by Mr. Elcock, of Wimborne, who gave entire satisfaction. The building was opened February 9th, 1893, by a sermon from the Rev. J. C. Smith, M.A. in the afternoon, and a public meeting in the evening. The total cost was £255; the bazaar and opening services realized £55. In June, 1895, a letter was received from Mr. Smith to the effect that through the assistance of a friend, he would discharge the remaining liabilities on Chapel and Manse, which amounted to

£44 10s. The heartiest thanks of the people were sent to Mr. Smith for this fresh proof of deep interest in their welfare, and to Mr. Isherwood of Southport for his most thoughtful and generous gift.

Joseph Blackburn, who was educated at Hackney College, and ministered for some years at Wednesbury, accepted a hearty and unanimous invitation in the early part of 1897, and is working with much satisfaction, and every prospect of success.

The former Chapel, in which lie the remains of Mrs. and Miss Howell, who seem to have returned to Bere after the decease of Mr. Howell, (pastor, 1791-1807), has been converted into a Parish Hall.

In common with Dorset Churches, numbers have been trained here, who have gone to strengthen the cause of God elsewhere; the loss to Bere has been the gain of other places. As true non-conformists and believers in spiritual religion, the names may be mentioned of John Bellows of Gloucester, an earnest member of the Society of Friends, and W. Mate (of Messrs. Mate and Sons, publishers of this volume), who are decendants of worthy men often referred to in this sketch.

D.

## BLANDFORD.

The story of the Church in Blandford carries us back into one of the stormiest periods of English History—the period of the Civil War between Charles I. and the Parliament. Everyone knows that in this contest the gentry, and the clergy of the Episcopal Church, threw in their lot with the King, while the middle-classes, with the Presbyterians and Independents, sided with the Parliament and constitutional government. At the time when our story opens, and in the West of England, the tide of victory was decidedly with the Parliament. Fairfax, had a short time before, driven the Royalists from Bridgwater and Langport, and had taken Bath, Sherborne Castle, and Bristol. Charles had been beheaded in January, 1649, and the Commonwealth had been



established. The Episcopal Church having espoused the King's side, and the clergy denouncing the Parliament and all its ways from their pulpits, felt the effects of the growing power and resentment of their opponents. The Episcopal form of Church government was set aside, the Prayer Book was forbidden to be read in the churches, and the lives and conduct of the clergy were inquired into, by Commissions appointed for the purpose. The effect of these enquiries was, that a considerable number of parsons were removed from their positions, or "sequestered," as the phrase then was ; some as delinquents, that is for being openly and avowedly opposed to the Parliament ; and others because they were ignorant, incompetent, or of scandalous lives. To the first class belonged the vicar of Blandford Forum, the Rev. John de Lindesay. During the troubles his living was sequestered. But the Puritans had more mercy than the Episcopal party showed, when the wheel of fortune brought them back to power in 1660, for they did not cast out to starve, those who were displaced, but allowed them, or their wives and children, one-fifth of their official incomes. This fifth of the living of Blandford was paid to the wife and children of Mr. Lindesay for many years. In 1650 a return, made by a Commission, speaks of "William Allen (Alleine), a learned, orthodox, and able divine, the present incumbent," who had been appointed by the Committee of the County. He was the son of the Rev. Richard Alleine, who for 50 years was Rector of Ditcheat, Somerset. Born at Ditcheat in 1614, he was educated at St. Alban's Hall, Oxford, where he graduated B.A. and M.A. On leaving the University he became chaplain to a nobleman in London, supposed to have been Lord Digby. At the beginning of the Civil War he was resident at Ilchester, where he was sometimes consulted by great officers on the Parliamentary side and was proclaimed, by the Cavaliers, a traitor, in three market towns. He was repeatedly plundered, and maltreated, and had many hairbreadth escapes. He next removed to Bristol, and thence to London. On Mr. Lindesay's sequestration he was appointed Minister of Blandford, where the living was worth £40 a year, out of which he had to allow, and did allow, Mrs. Lindesay and her children £8.



It would appear that he was a Congregationalist. Calamy says that "he gathered a Church here." The phrase "gathered Church" was the one which our forefathers used to indicate a Church, not formed of all the inhabitants of a parish, but of the spiritually-minded, converted people, who formed a Church such as every Congregational Church is to-day. "He was a man of good learning and piety; peculiarly eminent for his modesty and meekness. A true, patient labourer in the Gospel."\* "His parishioners held him in the utmost veneration and he dearly loved them."† There is some doubt as to when he ceased to be Minister of the Parish Church. Calamy says "he was driven from it at the Restoration." More recent researches, however, point to a date two years later. "When the Act of Uniformity passed the vicar of Blandford never hesitated but freely quitted his living, and ministered to a few people in private."† Mr. Alleine and these "few people," to whom he ministered, were, in all probability, the founders of the Congregational Church in Blandford. Where they worshipped is unknown. Nor is this anything to be wondered at. Concealment was their only security. Their meetings were unlawful and were rigidly—even passionately, suppressed. Dorchester gaol was for years full of Nonconformist ministers caught in the act of praying and preaching "to a few people in private." Driven from the neighbourhood by the Five Mile Act in 1665, Mr. Alleine removed to "Bristol, where he carried on his ministry, with ever increasing acceptance. From thence he went to Yeovil. There he died October, 1677."†

Bereft of their Pastor the people continued to meet, and it is possible that the Rev. John Wesley, the ejected Minister of Winterbourne Whitechurch, who so curiously anticipated on a small scale the methods of his famous grandson, in itinerating from church to church, may have visited the little flock. It is certain that Wesley was imprisoned here. The first place of which we have any record of their using for worship, is in 1672 when Charles II. issued his famous Indulgence. Then, on November

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\* Calamy's Noncon. Mem.

† Dict. Nat. Bieg.

18th, a license was granted to hold a Congregational service in the house of John Paige in Blandford\*. No minister is named, as is usually the case where the people had a settled minister among them, so that we may conclude that they were still "as sheep having no shepherd." The veil falls once more upon the little community, with the withdrawal of the Indulgence in the following year.

There is a tradition, which is at least 150 years old, that a Rev. Mr. Reynolds ministered next to the people, and that the meetings were held in a place, which came to be known as Langhorne's barn.† This tradition was once regarded as having little authority, but the unexpected discovery of some old deeds, that have in some inexplicable way survived the fire of 1731, when all the parish and town records were burnt, and in which the chapel records were supposed to have been destroyed, has given it new weight. These deeds show that Langhorne's barn stood on part of the graveyard at the back of the present chapel, and that very soon after the passing of the Toleration Act, that is, on April 15th, 1692, William Stayner, grocer, and William Langhorne, woolstapler, purchased the site (52 by 27 feet) from Richard and Nicholas Evans. Soon after, the barn was removed, and in July, 1711, they conveyed the same "plot of ground upon which stood heretofore an old barn, but thereon is lately built a messuage or house intended to be set apart for the worship of Almighty God by the people of Christ, called Presbyterians," to thirteen trustees, whose names, as the first of a long list of trustees it may be interesting to recall. They were Robert Wolferys, Whatcombe, Whitchurch, yeoman; Nicholas Michell, Tarrant Hinton, clothier; Robert Tito, Sturminster Marshall, yeoman; Robert Scott, Child Okeford, hosier; William Doone, Child Okeford, grocer; John Muston, Tarrant Hinton, clothier; Henry Wells, jun., woolstapler; Nathaniel Benjefield, woolstapler; Isaac White, hosier; John Frampton, woolstapler; Richard Gravett, gentleman; John Bull, baker; Edmund Cleves, hosier; all of Blandford.

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\* State Paper Off.

† Thompson MSS.

From this list it is evident that the adherents of the congregation were drawn from a wide area, coming in on Sundays from the surrounding villages, as well as from the town. About this period the name Congregational appears to have been dropped, and Presbyterian adopted. This is an unusual transition. It would be easy to mention scores of churches that were originally called Presbyterian, which ultimately adopted the more democratic Congregational polity. There are very few that have gone the other way. The change in name may have been due to the influence of the Minister, the Rev. John Powell, who settled here about 1793. He appears to have been a Presbyterian, a member of the Western Assembly,\* ordained May 13, 1793. The change of name may also indicate a change in the method of conducting the business of the church. English Presbyterianism was never fully organised, except in London and part of Lancashire. In other parts of the country, the Presbyterians were as independent of outside interference as the Congregational churches. The principal difference between the two was that the Presbyterians committed the admission of members to the ministers and elders; the appointment of ministers to the trustees and subscribers; and the management of the temporal affairs of the community to a committee: while the Congregationalists retained the whole of these functions as the peculiar work of the Church members.† Some, but not all, of these characteristics of the English Presbyterians are retained by the church at Blandford to the present time. Little is known about Mr. Powell, except that he remained upwards of twenty years, and removed to Barnstaple (the only minister of this church who ever removed to another charge) on the death of Mr. Peard, in 1716, and died there January, 1721.‡ His orthodoxy was questioned. An old lady formerly boasted "That though Blandford was within a very short distance from her house, yet every Sunday for ten years she rode to Wareham to hear Mr. Clark, though it was at least twelve miles from where she lived. Upon being asked what was her fancy for putting herself to so much inconvenience, she replied, very heartily, that she pre-

\*Gilling's MS. Minutes.

†James, Presbyterian Churches, &c., p. 17.

‡Brit. Museum Add. MSS. 24,484.

ferred riding through dirty roads, a long and tedious way, in quest of Mr. Clark's gospel, to going over the threshold of her door to hear Mr. Powell's law."\*

On Mr. Powell's departure, the friends applied to Mr. Edward Warren for advice. He recommended them to send for the Rev. Malachi Blake,† who had been previously settled at Awliscombe, near Honiton, and at Langport. From this last place he removed to Blandford in 1716, so that the people were not long without a minister. He was the second son of the Rev. Malachi Blake, of Blagdon, near Taunton, by whose labours the foundation of the congregation at Wellington was laid. He was descended from a collateral branch of the family of the great Commonwealth sea-captain, Admiral Blake, and received his education in one of the private Academies by which Dissenters, at the time, tried to compensate their sons for their exclusion from the Universities. Mr. Blake was a man of eminent piety, a diligent and faithful minister, of evangelical sentiments, zealous for what he believed to be the truth, without narrowness or bigotry. He does not seem to have been tinctured with the Arianism that worked such havoc in many of the churches of this and other parts of England. He maintained an unsullied character through life, and by a peaceful, humble spirit, preserved the esteem of all who were acquainted with him. Being a handsome man, of engaging manners and good education, he made many friends, and his society was sought after by many of the neighbouring gentry—the well-known Geo. Doddington, Esq., who had a seat at Eastbury, and to whom Thomson dedicated his poem "Summer," being his intimate friend. He had the happiness to be able, and the heart to be willing, to talk, without being suspected of cant and without giving offence, to high and low alike, upon the concerns of the soul.

On Friday, June 4th, 1731, a fire, distinguished from the many others that have at various times preyed upon the town, as the *great* fire, broke out, at a time when small-pox was raging in the

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\*Month Rep. vi., 203.

† Two Sermons preached at Blandford. By Edwd. Warren. Published 1735.

place, and consumed every building in the town—the church, the town hall, the old meeting-house, built on the site of Langhorne's barn, and all the dwelling-houses, with, tradition says, only five or six exceptions. The damage was estimated at £85,276 2s. 8½d. Some idea may be formed of the value of money, and of the character of the chapel, from the fact that, in this estimate, its value was put down at £160. So terrible was the loss to the inhabitants, that they were quite unable to repair it, unaided; whereupon the nation came to their assistance, and an Act of Parliament (5 Geo. II.) was passed for rebuilding the town. The King also gave £1,000, the Queen £200, and the Prince of Wales £100, to be distributed among the sufferers by Mr. Doddington. On Mr. Blake's visiting him, some time after the fire, two purses were laid before him containing the sums apportioned to the rebuilding the parish church and the meeting-house respectively. "There, Malachi," said Mr. Doddington, "you may take which you please." "The church is the larger piece of building, and requires the greater sum," replied Mr. Blake, "I, therefore, take the less." "Ah, that is what I expected from you," said his friend. The chapel, built in part at least out of the funds contributed by royalty, was the usual square building of the period, fitted with family pews, and having the "extinguisher-shaped sounding-board over the pulpit, and would seat about 300 worshippers." Of the great fire, Mr. Blake wrote an interesting account—the only history of it that has come down to us—and every year preached an anniversary sermon on the subject. Being burnt out of his own house, Mr. Blake went to reside for a time at Charlton Marshall, and there licensed his house as a place of worship. It appears that there had been a service carried on at Charlton for some years, for on January 15th, 1723, "the dwelling-house of Robert Meech" was licensed as a place in which to hold Presbyterian services.

During his later years, Mr. Blake's former bright and cheerful disposition was clouded with melancholia, to such an extent that in preaching, or even the giving out of a hymn at a prayer-meeting, he would often burst into a flood of tears, most distressing to witness. There are indications that in these latter



years his pecuniary circumstances were somewhat narrowed.\* At length his friends advised that he should obtain the help of an assistant, and in 1753 the Rev. Henry Field entered upon the duty. The two ministers worked together in perfect harmony until Mr. Blake's death †—Feb. 1760—after a ministry that had extended over forty-four years. He left four children, (1) Sarah, married to Mr. Robert Fisher, mother of the late Mr. Wm. Fisher ; (2) Mrs. Tice, mother of Malichi Tice, who bequeathed "Cooling's Land for the use of the congregation of Protestant Dissenters of the Presbyterian or Independent persuasion assembling in the town of Blandford Forum," and grandmother of Elizabeth, wife of the Rev. D. Gunn, of Christchurch, and Sarah, who became Mr. Field's second wife ; (3) William, a mercer of Blandford ; and (4) Betty, who, it is thought, died unmarried. Besides "An Account of the Fire," Mr. Blake published "A charge given at the ordination of the Rev. James Kirkup, at South Petherton," and a pamphlet entitled "Kilmarnock's Ghost."

In the month following Mr. Blake's death the following invitation was addressed to Mr. Field :—"Whereas it has pleased God to remove by death our late worthy Pastor, the Rev. Mr. Blake ; We, the Subscribers and Members of the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Blandford Forum, being met together (after public notice given) do unite in our Request and Call to the Rev. Mr. Field (who has preached as an assistant to Mr. Blake for some years) to succeed him as our Minister, and take the Pastoral care of this Church and Congregation. Witness our hands this 14th day of March, 1760. Edwd. Madgwick, John Clench, Wm. Tice, Wm. Blake, Wm. Kaines, Mattw. Comings, Benjn. Gifford, Ambrose Biles, Thos. Budden, Saml. Bellows, senr., Thos. Tizzard, Richd. Clench, Jas. Greenway, Richd. Reekes, John Lockyer, Geo. Bellows, Geo. Holdway, Saml. Scutt, Wm. Nichols, Jno. Street, Saml. Evans, Saml. Bellows, junr., Wm. Paull, Thos. Lacey, Geo. Mitchell, Jos. Nichols, Moses Line's mark, Saml. Evans, junr."

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\* Congregational Fund Board Minutes.

† Buried in the churchyard, Feb. 21st, 1760 ; first vault on left side of path. opposite almshouse ; monument destroyed, and stone inscribed "Horlock" laid upon the site.



This call, in which the Church played quite a subordinate part, having been accepted, Mr. Field was ordained on March 28th, as the following certificate shows. The original is in Latin ; we give a translation : “ Be it known to all and everyone to whom this letter may come that the bearer, Henry Field, student of theology, a soberminded and pious youth, of approved learning and integrity, was set apart dedicated and consecrated, by exhortation and prayer, and by the laying on of hands, to discharge holy ecclesiastical duties, to preach the word of God, to administer the holy sacraments, and to perform whatever duties may arise, on the 28th day of May, A.D. 1760, in an assembly of the faithful at Blandford, in the County of Dorset, called together by us Presbyters and Ministers of the word of God here assembling (signed), S. Phillips, W. Edwards, S. Reader, Rich. Pearson, Danl. Fisher, S. Phillips, jun., Jerh. Field, John Bryant, Joseph Wilkins, Fran. Newton, Jno. Evans, Danl. Varder, John Punfield, Thos. Williams.”

Mr. Field, thus ordained, was the son of pious parents, and was especially indebted to the teaching and influence of his mother for his first religious impressions. He was born about five miles from Hitchin, Herts, where his father lived upon and successfully cultivated an estate that had been the property of his family for generations. At an early age Henry was sent to reside with his grandmother, who lived at Hitchin, that he might attend a classical school and receive a good education. Under his grandmother's influence his early convictions deepened and, to the joy of his parents, he joined the church, and expressed a desire to become a minister. He was accordingly entered a student of Homerton College, where he was regarded as one of the most promising students, and, when application was made to them, he was recommended by the tutors as colleague to Mr. Blake. After some hesitation, due to shyness and modesty, the young man started, for Blandford in the Flying Coach, which travelled with such celerity that he covered the entire distance of 104 miles by travelling only two days and one night. This did not include one night when the coach put up on the road, and the travellers went to bed. It is recorded that he “fixed in his own mind, on six weeks, as the

term of his continuance at Blandford." But, in his case, as in that of so many others, it was the unexpected that happened. For here he remained 66 years, seven as assistant to Mr. Blake and 59 as sole minister. He was twice married. Early in 1759 he married Miss Pearson, of Lymington, and removed into the minister's house on the death of Mr. Blake. Here his wife died Dec. 3, 1765, leaving him with one daughter, who survived her mother only five months. He subsequently married Miss Sarah Tice, as above stated, who died, after a lingering illness that extended over many years, April 27, 1791, at the age of 53, leaving him with three daughters.

Mr. Field seems to have possessed a kind, gentle, unselfish nature. His relations with his flock were exceedingly happy. The Rev. John Angell James described him as "that holy and blameless man." His sermons, though not eloquent, were always such as to command the respect of his people, and were practical rather than learned or controversial. His life supported, illustrated and enforced his pulpit utterances. In private he was the friend and sympathiser of all who were in trouble or need; but he was slow of speech and somewhat uncommunicative, which some people regretted. But still he was very successful, and gathered or kept around him "respectable and excellent men, whose names are still precious, and whose memory is still fragrant, who formed one of the most respectable country congregations I ever knew."\*

He took a great interest in the welfare of other Churches and in the spread of the gospel in Dorset, and was one of the fathers and founders of the Dorset Association of Congregational Churches in 1796. Soon after he had reached the age of 70 he desired to retire, but was persuaded to retain the Pastorate, and obtain the assistance of a colleague. "Here in this town I was born," said the Rev. J. A. James, "here were the scenes of my childhood and youth. To this place of worship I was brought as a child by my parents, who worshipped God on this spot and whose ashes now repose in the adjoining cemetery. . . I have reminiscences of all the assistant ministers that were associated

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\* Rev. J. Angell James' Fun. Sermon for Mr. Keynes, p. 19.

with Mr. Field—of Morrell, and Frost, and Gurteen, and Golding.” None of these, however, remained long. Eventually the Rev. Richard Keynes came to be his co-Pastor in 1802, and was ordained September 9th of the same year. From this time until his death Mr. Field usually preached at the morning service, Mr. Keynes conducting the evening service. In 1802 or 1803 a Sunday School was commenced, and in 1803 a piece of land adjoining the chapel, given by Mrs. William Blake for the purpose, was first used as a burial ground; Mrs. Elizabeth Batrick being the first person interred therein. Mr. Field’s last sermon was preached on the last Sunday morning of 1820. The day was very cold, and he took a chill from which he never recovered. He was buried in the Parish Churchyard, in the same vault as his wives and children, near the tomb of his predecessor, and was followed to the grave by a large number of the members of his own and other Churches in the town and neighbourhood. A marble tablet in the chapel reads :

This Tablet is erected  
To the Memory of the Rev. Henry Field,  
Who Preached the Gospel in this Place 66 Years.  
Obit. 5th January, 1821. *Ætatis* 88.

Mr. Keynes, who now became sole Minister of the Church was no ordinary man. A native of Salisbury, born in 1780, he was brought up by a maiden aunt. “His parents belonged to the Church of England, in the doctrines and rites of which he was educated. His conversion to God took place while he was engaged as a clerk in an attorney’s office, and in some measure through the influence of a brother.”\* Accounts differ as to the precise details of this conversion. His granddaughter, Mrs. Upward, says that his brothers, being connected with the Congregational Church in Salisbury, invited him to go with them to hear the Rev. Mr. Adams, the Congregational Minister, and that it was through hearing him preach that he became a decided Christian, and resolved to devote his life to the ministry. Mr. T. B. Warren, of Shillingstone, one of Mr. Keynes’ old pupils,

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\* Rev. J. A. James, Fun. Sermon.

relates that he often heard his old master tell, how that, on one occasion when returning from Blandford races, he was attracted to a crowd, which proved to be an open-air service conducted by Mr. Field. Reining in his horse, he listened. The text—Ecc. xi., 9—struck him at once, and the sermon went home with such effect that it wrought conviction of sin, and led to his conversion. It is not difficult, however, to see how both these accounts may be true; how the young man, impressed under the preaching of Mr. Adams, was brought to a decision under the preaching of Mr. Field; or arrested by Mr. Field's words, had his mind prepared to receive the Gospel from Mr. Adams. Mr. Keynes soon afterwards joined the Church in Salisbury, and, in due time, proceeded to Hoxton Academy, and, after the usual course of study, settled at Tisbury. Leaving this place, much to the regret of the people, he supplied three months at Poole, where he had among his hearers his future brother-in-law, the distinguished Minister of Carr's Lane, Birmingham, John Angell James, then a draper's apprentice. Mr. Keynes would have been invited to remain at Poole, but for the fact that negotiations had already been commenced with the Rev. T. Durrant, who afterwards settled there. At this juncture Mr. Field and his people heard of him, and invited him to visit Blandford, as an occasional supply. This led to his becoming co-Pastor. For nineteen years he and Mr. Field lived on the most intimate and cordial terms. They walked, talked and worked together. No shadow of jealousy or misunderstanding ever fell between them. "It would be difficult to find," said Mr. Keynes,\* "two men whose constitutional temperaments more widely differed." Mr. Field was gentle and peaceable; while in these earlier days Mr. Keynes was somewhat dogmatical, fond of disputation, and given to the use of irony and sarcasm. Yet, "for nineteen years there was never an unkind word that passed between us, nor even a momentary interruption of friendship."<sup>\*</sup>

Soon after his settlement at Blandford Mr. Keynes married Miss James, daughter of a mercer in the town, and sister of the Rev. J. A. James; a lady in every way fitted to be a minister's

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\* Pastoral Letter, 1846.

wife. To add to his income, never at any time large, but smaller at this time when the church had to maintain two ministers than it was afterwards, he commenced a school, which he carried on successfully for many years. Many of his pupils did exceedingly well—one became one of the foremost mathematicians of his age and a professor in the London University—another, the Rev. John Glyde, died in 1857, minister of Horton Lane, Bradford, Yorks. In his later years Mr. Keynes exchanged the occupation of schoolmaster for that of a farmer. These pursuits, however, were not allowed to interfere with his preparation for the pulpit. He rose very early in the morning and secured almost as much time for study, before he entered on his secular occupations, as some men do who have the whole day at command. But they did prevent the early promise of his ministry being fulfilled—they prevented him from becoming the popular preacher and platform speaker which his clear, strong voice, his powerful imagination and his masculine understanding must have made him, had circumstances allowed him to give all his time to the special work of the ministry. Moreover, these other occupations seem to have prevented his being much in the homes of his people. "He certainly," says Mr. James, "was never much of a pastor, a matter often lamented by his flock." Notwithstanding his many engagements, he found time to take a great interest in the other churches of the county, and especially the village churches. A Mission Church was commenced at Spettisbury, in 1845, and at Winterborne Kingston, in 1852, both supplied by devoted members of the church in Blandford. Mr. Keynes was also for many years one of the most active members of the Dorset Association—present and actively engaged in almost every meeting. An unfortunate difference\* of opinion from some other members, caused him to sever his connection with it in 1850. He had previously written a pamphlet entitled "Puseyism and its tendencies: with an examination of official claims dependent on administrative functions," published 1849, in which he vindicated the right of the members of a Church to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the absence of an ordained minister; and claims that

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\* For details see Stour Row.



the faith of the communicants, and not the orders of the minister, give validity to the service. It is no part of the business of this history to pronounce upon every controversy we chronicle. Our readers must judge for themselves. Most of them will probably come to the conclusion that Mr. Keynes was in advance of his age. But the separation did not in the least abate the esteem, in which he was held by his late colleagues in the Association. It rather enhanced it. If there is one thing Congregationalists respect, it is a man who dares to think for himself, and to act upon his convictions. The very man whose action had most to do with Mr. Keynes' leaving the Association, was the man to stand and pronounce a panygyric over his grave, the Rev. T. Evans, of Shaftesbury. His character has been thus summed up—"his inflexible integrity and uprightness—his noble generosity and abhorrence of all that was mean, sordid and selfish—his unwearied industry and diligence—is well known." He lived the gospel he preached and himself ripened in beauty and grace of character with the years.

For fifty years he kept on the even tenor of his way, preaching the gospel and growing in the affection of an united and happy people, and in the esteem of men of all creeds and of none. On the 24th March, 1852, his jubilee was celebrated by a public meeting, under the presidency of that tower of strength to Blandford nonconformity, Malachi Fisher, Esq., grand-son of Rev. Malachi Blake, most generous of men. An address was presented to their venerable and beloved pastor from "The Church and Congregation of Protestant Dissenters of the Congregational order, Blandford," accompanied by a purse containing £50. He was evidently infirm and shaken at the time. His infirmities shortly increased and after a long and severe affliction, he passed away, September 22nd, 1853, aged 75, and was buried in a vault in front of the Chapel. His funeral sermon, from which we have repeatedly quoted was preached by his brother-in-law, the Rev. J. A. James, October 2nd. A marble tablet in the Chapel commemorates some of these facts. One of his sons was the Rev. John Keynes, of Wimborne, \* three other sons emigrated to

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\* See under Wimborne.



Australia where they not only succeeded well, but proved sturdy helpers of Congregationalism in the colony.

The church, now for the first time, since the settlement of Mr. Blake in 1716, without a minister, heard many ministers as supplies. At length on March 5th, 1855, they decided to invite the Rev. Benjamin Gray, B.A., a student of New College, to become their minister. He entered upon what proved to be his only pastorate, 12th May, and was ordained on October 17th, of the same year. The choice thus made was an eminently wise one. Under the cultured and earnest ministry of Mr. Gray, the congregation was not only kept together, but † prospered, as was evidenced by the works undertaken and so successfully carried to completion.

In response to the challenge of an anonymous friend (supposed to have been Mr. H. F. Fisher), who, in the year of Mr. Gray's settlement, offered £100 towards re-building the minister's house, which had become delapidated, on condition that the whole amount, needed for the purpose, was subscribed before the work was undertaken—a challenge which the congregation was not slow to respond to—the present manse was built on the old site, at a cost of £414, and thither the pastor brought his young bride in 1856.

In May of that year the church, feeling that there might be some doubt as to its relation to the Dorset Association of Congregational Churches, in consequence of the withdrawal of the late pastor, recognised and confirmed its connection therewith by special resolution, and desired to be represented by its minister and delegates at the next meeting.

Attention was afterwards directed to the condition of the chapel, which was felt to need considerable alterations and repairs, to make it as comfortable and attractive as befitted the position and work of the church. After careful and patient consideration, it was decided, that the best thing to do would be, to pull down the old structure, and build an entirely new chapel. Accordingly plans were obtained, and the corner-stone of the present neat, light, and comfortable chapel was laid by Malachi

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† Vide Minutes.

Fisher, Esq., in June, and the completed building was opened December 6th, 1867, when sermons were preached by the Rev. David Thomas, B.A.,\* of Bristol, and the Rev. T. W. Aveling, † of London. The liberality of the people was once more shown, the whole cost £2,220 being raised, and paid within a year. Two or three years later, the organ was added.

After a little breathing-time, the church addressed itself to the task of providing more suitable accommodation for the Sunday School: In 1880 the present school-room—admirably adapted for its purpose—was built parallel to the chapel, on part of Cooling's land, which had been given to the church by M. Tice, Esq., as above stated. The cost £640, was defrayed in part by a balance from the British School fund, and as to the greater part, by donations and subscriptions.

Congregational Churches owe more than is generally recognised to their deacons. In its deacons, as might have been expected from its story of continuous life, peace, progress and usefulness, the Church in Blandford has been singularly blessed. There has been a succession of remarkable men among them—genuine stalwarts. Malachi Tice, the donor of Cooling's land, held office as a deacon for fifty years, and of him it was said that, "True to his own principles he exercised true charity towards those that differed from him." During the course of his ministry Mr. Gray was called upon to part with three deacons who must have, at least, a passing notice. In January, 1862, the Rev. D. G. Bartlett, M.A., who had discharged the office of deacon with diligence and fidelity for six years, removed to Scarborough, and later to Highgate, where he conducted a successful school and still resides. On December 23rd, 1872, there died another deacon, one of the most remarkable men that Dorset Congregationalism has ever produced—a man of untiring energy, of wide interests, and many activities—Mr. Malachi Fisher. How many years he held office as a deacon cannot be ascertained, the Church records being defective. But in 1854† a resolution speaks of him as "Having acted as a deacon for very many years."

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\* Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1865.

† Chairman of same, 1876.

‡ Minute Book.

He was also superintendent of the Sunday School for over sixty years, and, from 1824 to 1869, he was the Treasurer of the Dorset Association, and, as the minutes clearly show, was the life and soul of the organization for many years—indeed, it may be truly said that the continued existence of the Association was, more than once, due to his courage, constancy and determination, which never failed him. “He brought forth fruit in old age.” He passed away in the faith and peace of the Gospel, at the age of 88, and was interred in the Chapel burying-ground, on Sunday, December 29th, just before the morning service. On September 20th, 1881, the Church was saddened by the sudden death of its senior deacon, Mr. Charles Pond. He had been present at the week-night service, only two days before, and taken part in the devotions. He was the most kindly and genial of men; large bodied, large hearted, and interested in every good work, and especially in the work connected with the village Chapels around Blandford, and indeed all over the county. In 1854 he was appointed superintendent of the Sunday School at Stourpaine, going thither to his duties in all weathers. “The village station at Winterborne Kingston had been the scene of his untiring christian activity,” writes Mr. Gray, “for many years and the work, which he had carried on and directed there, had been fruitful of great good. . . . And it is to him that the plans for the enlargement of the Chapel are due”—plans that were carried out as a token of respect for his memory. From 1872 until his death he was the devoted treasurer of the Dorset Association, and its chairman in 1878. His interest in all that concerned the welfare of the Churches of the county and their pastors, and his sincere and manly piety, were as conspicuous as they were attractive and helpful. His fellow-townsmen also put honour upon him, by calling him to the office of mayor of their ancient borough.

Mr. Gray had the joy of seeing many come into the church, notably one of his sons, now the Rev. George Buchanan Gray, M.A., who, after being educated in the school which his father conducted for many years, was recommended by the Church, November 5th, 1885, for admission to New College, London

(his father's old college), as a student for the ministry. A distinguished career, first at New College, and afterwards at Mansfield College, Oxford, resulted in his being appointed one of the professors in the latter college, which much coveted position he now holds.

In addition to all his other labours, Mr. Gray was the Secretary of the Dorset Association from 1872 to 1884. He was as nearly a perfect secretary as the Dorset, or any other Association, will ever find. Under his guidance it grew and flourished. He, and others, such as Mr. Fisher and Mr. Pond, Matthew Devenish, Esq., of Dorchester, and B. Chandler, Esq., of Sherborne, laboured, and we, who remain, have entered into their labours. Nothing but failing health would have induced him to give up a work that was, in itself, so useful, and so congenial to him. On his resignation, he was presented with an illuminated address and a cheque for £70, as a mark of the esteem in which he was held.

After thirty-five years of happy, useful ministry, in which he ever had the devoted assistance of Mrs. Gray, Mr. Gray, who suffered from alarming attacks of heart trouble, which sometimes came on in the pulpit, felt it his duty to resign the charge, which he did March 25th, 1890, to the great regret of the Church, by whom he was beloved, and of the inhabitants of the town generally, who held him in the very highest respect as a Christian minister and a gentleman. He did not at once remove from the town, but continued to supply the pulpit until his successor was appointed. The description the Rev. John Angell James gave of the congregation as he remembered it about 1800, "one of the most respectable country congregations I ever knew," was equally applicable when Mr. Gray left it.

The Rev. W. Fry, the present minister, formerly of Wellingborough, was called August 3rd, 1890, and commenced his ministry October 5th. Once more the Church has been happy in its choice, and all the institutions and activities of the place have experienced a new baptism of zeal and power. One outcome of this has been the renovation of the chapel, which was undertaken in 1894, and included the removal of the organ gallery, the enlargement of the recess behind the pulpit for the organ, a new

roof, &c., &c., making it one of the prettiest and most comfortable places of worship in the county. The total cost of the changes was £455 3s. 4d., and, as in the case of the original cost of the building, was all paid within a year. O.

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### CHARLTON MARSHALL.

Charlton Marshall, a village about a mile-and-a-half from Spetisbury, on the high road to Blandford, demands a brief notice. At an early period Nonconformist services were held in this place. In the list of licenses issued by Quarter Sessions we find the following :—

“93, Dwelling House of Robert Meech, Charlton Marshall, Presby., 15th January, 1722-3.”

“105, Dwelling House of Rev. Malachi Blake, Charlton Marshall Presby., October, 1731.”

Mr. Blake, whose house had been destroyed in the great fire of Blandford, came out for a time to reside in this village, and opened his dwelling for religious worship. A small chapel, up a lane, at one time used by the Wesleyans, but now shut up, was secured by Messrs. H. Brown and J. MacWilliam, of Blandford, and opened for a Sunday School. After a while, Mr. Henry Fisher was induced to purchase the building, which was put into repair, and the teaching and preaching were continued by friends from Blandford. In 1845 Mr. H. Hodges bought the chapel, and has since carried on the work. In the year 1861 the place was rebuilt at his own expense; his faithful and gratuitous labours these many years have not been without evidences of the Divine blessing. D.

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### BRIDPORT.

The use of the word Congregational, as describing our Churches, has sometimes been regarded as a modern innovation, indicative of, either some change of principle, or anxiety to dissociate ourselves from our past. “In the present day they are changing the name of Independents for that of Congrega-



tionalists" says one writer. † No such charge can be brought against the Church at Bridport. The men who founded and fostered the work of nonconformity there, described themselves (as they did elsewhere) as "Congregational." The Rev. John Eaton, who held the Rectory of Bridport from 1650, and who, for some unknown reason, probably because with the turn of the Stuarts, he saw that his liberty was at an end, gave up the living about the end of 1660, was a Congregationalist, and, like many another, he doubtless had a "gathered church" within the parochial building. On leaving the rectory he still continued to preach in private houses, until he was driven away by the Five Mile Act, passed in 1665. He appears then to have gone northward and preached in Somerset, particularly at Merriott,\* in "the house of Thomas Coles," where, as spies reported, about 160 persons attended the conventicle. On Charles II.'s Declaration of Indulgence, he obtained a license to act as "a Congregational teacher in John White's house at Templecombe—April 16th, 1672." Mr. Eaton is described by Calamy as "an ingenious and delicate preacher."

About the same time that Mr. Eaton ceased to be rector of Bridport, the Rev. Joseph Hallett returned to his native town. Born here in 1628, "he became by his own exertions a good Greek Scholar, and proficient in Hebrew. In 1652 he was called to the ministry, and ordained to Hinton St. George, Somerset, October 28th. The ordination took place in St. Thomas' Church, Salisbury, by the 'Classical Presbytery of Sarum.' From Hinton he was promoted, in 1656, to the rectory of Chisleborough with West Chisnock," from which he was ousted on the return of the former rector, who was restored "with his majesty"—1660. He then retired to Bridport, living with his father till he settled at Bradpole, where he kept a conventicle, or, in other words, held services. Though Mr. Hallett had received Presbyterian ordination, it seems more than probable that he ministered to a Congregational congregation, for in June, 1672, Elizabeth Hallett's house was licensed as a "Congregational" place of worship. He seems to have been living in Exeter in 1669, and is described in a con-

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† Blunt's Household Theology p 207.

\* Col. Man. Tennysoni.



temporary manuscript as "a Presbyterian, but not a keeper of a conventicle."\* About 1672 he was called to Exeter, and became minister of a congregation there. On the revocation of the Indulgence, he was brought up at the Guildhall, for preaching to some 200 persons in the house of one Palmer, and fined £20. Continuing to preach he was twice imprisoned in the South Gate, where his prison experiences shattered his health, and he died, March 14th, 1689.†

The man who, as far as it is now possible to judge, was the first permanent pastor of the church was the Rev. Richard Downe, who was ejected from the curacy of Winterbourne Monkton, by the Act of Uniformity, 1662. It is thought that he, too, was a native of Bridport, and thither he repaired on his ejection. The Downes were long and honourably associated with Bridport, and he may have possessed an estate, in or near the town, to which he retired. At the earliest possible moment he took out a license to be "a Congregational teacher in the house of John Golding—May 1st, 1672." "It is believed that this house was situated in the rear of that next but one to the present Literary and Scientific Institute, and that it was gradually altered and adapted to the purposes of public worship until it assumed the character of the old Dissenting Meeting-house, which occupied that spot. The members of the congregation at this time numbered about one hundred. In 1680, Mr. Downe, and some of his congregation, were imprisoned for their non-conformity, the Government having become more jealous than ever, of all who dissented, in the slightest degree, from the Church of England." The rage against the Dissenters made their position almost unendurable. Congregations were broken up; ministers and others, were thrown into prison; and the meeting-houses in some cases destroyed, and in others despoiled of their pulpits and seats. This happened all over the country. The *Axminster Chronicle* writes:—"Anno. 1681. Towards the latter end of this year The Clouds returned again & gathered blacknesse apace. A dreadful storm of persecution began to fall, & it proved to be a violent storm, & of some continuance. The

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\* Cod. Man. Tenn.

† Dict. Natu'l. Biog.

Lord stirring up Adversaries again to Afflict the Professours of Religion, & to break the assemblies of the people of God, Ranging vp & down like Roaring & Ravening Lyons, with fiercenesse & Rage in many places, & about this time was this Congregation constrained to leave their public Meeting-house at Wickcroft. The violence of the Adversary was so great that they could not assemble together in that place, with any quietnesse or safety, for a considerable space of time, But wander'd vp & down, sometimes in one place, or wood, sometimes in another, as in former daies; And thus they continued stedfastly in their assembling together, the Lord being as a shadow of a great Rock to them in a weary Land." \*

Bridport did not escape. Mr. Strode, of Parnham, near Beaminster, approved himself "a zealous loyal person at Lyme Regis"—July 7th, 1683. He missed the preacher, but destroyed all the seats, and pulpit of the meeting-house there, and then proceeded to Bridport, and did the same work of destruction in that town.† The dissenters of Bridport were, like those at Axminster, compelled to forsake their meeting-houses, and assemble in lonely places in the fields or woods. The Devon Magistrates at the Quarter Sessions, held at Exeter, October 2nd, 1683, made an order, offering a reward of forty shillings to any person who apprehends a nonconformist minister, and the Bishop of Exeter required his clergy to read the order from their pulpits. These cruelties helped the dissenters to look favourably on the claims of the Duke of Monmouth, when he landed at Lyme, in June, 1685, "upon intelligence that there were several persons in Bridport ready to join the Duke, if the way was clear of the constables' guard, then kept in the town, Major Manley was sent to bring off those who were willing to join." ‡ Whether any of these belonged to Mr. Downe's congregation, it is impossible to say. But after the defeat of Monmouth, and the Bloody Assizes, the inhabitants had to endure the dreadful spectacle of the execution of twelve persons, by the order of

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\* Axminster Ecclesiastica p. 67.

† State Papers. Dom. Sir L. Jenkins' Coll vi. 207.

‡ Wade State Papers, quoted by Roberts.

Jefferys.\* Only two of the names have come down to us — Benjamin Sandford and John Bennet.

Mr. Downe was succeeded by the Rev. Samuel Baker, who is described in the Axminster Church Roll, about 1678 as “of Hawkchurch or Thorncombe;” “afterwards Pastor of the Church of Christ, at Bridport.” He was certainly here in May, 1698,† but how much earlier is not known. In a return dated 1715, he is described as an Independent. The congregation by this time consisted of between 500 and 600 persons. He had the reputation of being an excellent evangelical preacher, and published, among other works, a book entitled: “Heaven begun here on Earth, or a Help to Young Persons under their first convictions and closure with the Lord Jesus Christ, contained in Three Dialogues between a minister and a private Christian.” This was published in 1727. There is much uncertainty about the end of his ministry; several authorities asserting that he continued here until his death, which Thompson says occurred *about* 1725, while Wilson gives the date March, 1727, and another says he did not die until 1729.

It may be noticed, in passing, that a sidelight is thrown on the condition of things in Bridport, during Mr. Baker’s pastorate by a petition presented to Parliament—March 31st, 1715—by Peter Walters, Esq., against the election of John Strangeways, Esq., in which he alleged, among other things, “that the bailiffs admitted disqualified votes, also several who received common alms, and rejected the votes of Quakers.” The allegation seems to have been well founded, for on May 5th, the House of Commons resolved “That the right of election is in all the inhabitants not receiving alms.” And again on May 10th, “That John Strangeways, Esq., is not duly elected. That Peter Walters Esq., is duly elected a burgess for this borough.”‡

Two years after Mr. Baker’s death or removal, came the Rev. Robert Drewett, “the congregation continuing much in the same state till about 1734, when he removed (to Taunton) on

\* Murch’s Western Churches. † Minutes Congregational Fund Board.

‡ Oldfield’s Rep. History, iii., 388.

account of some difference between him and some of the people." \* His services at Taunton were of short duration ; at the end of one year symptoms of consumption obliged him to remove to Beaminster for change of air, which proved ineffectual, and there he died.

In 1735 the congregation gave an unanimous invitation to the Rev. Thomas Collins, who had been educated at Mr. Groves', at Taunton, and had previously held charges at Templecombe and Ilminster. In the early years of his ministry here, things seem to have gone well ; the congregations were large and intelligent, and included many people of good position in the town and neighbourhood. In order to understand what follows, it must be remembered that the air was at this time full of the Arian controversy—"Scarcely any question was debated throughout the West of England but the question of the Trinity. It was discussed in families, preached about from the pulpit, written about in pamphlets, and the local journals teemed with intelligence of what was being said and done." † After Mr. Collins had been in Bridport some four or five years, Mrs. Taylor, wife of Mr. Daniel Taylor, one of the deacons, began to suspect that, while studiously avoiding any expressions that might give offence, he was departing from the orthodox faith. Careful attention to his sermons, confirmed the suspicion. It was not what he said, but what he did not say, that confirmed it. She communicated her opinion to her husband and to some others, whose esteem for the amiable character of their minister made unwilling to share her opinions. But, their attention being called to it, they could not fail to notice "that the Saviour was not *exalted* in his sermons as formerly." To the questions they addressed to him, and to a series of questions they put to him, on the advice of the great Dr. Watts, he returned ambiguous answers. At length, on the suggestion of his old college friend, the Rev. John Whitty, of Lyme, at whose suggestion he had been originally invited to Bridport, they asked, "do you believe that Jesus Christ was God equal with the father from all eternity?" To this he candidly

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\* Thompson (c. 1775).

† Skeats' History of the Free Churches, p. 305.



answered, "No, he did not." On this, two-hundred of the congregation withdrew. Such as had horses or conveyances went over to Charmouth on Sunday to hear the Rev. Thomas Henderson, while, for those who found this course impossible, a room was hired in Factory, or North, Street (then Pig Lane), where they could read a sermon, and pray together. This room was licensed as a place of worship July 12th, 1742, and is described as "dwelling house of Daniel Taylor." The majority—some three hundred—however, still adhered to their pastor, and continued to enjoy his ministry until he was laid aside by a paralytic seizure in 1762, a second attack of which carried him off in 1765. His congregation is now represented by the congregation worshipping at the Unitarian Chapel, erected on the site of the old Meeting-house, 1791. Mr. Collins is described by those who knew him well, as "a most amiable and honest man ; few equalled him in candour, honesty and modesty ; cheerful in his temper, though he spent most of his time in his study, and kind and affable in his whole deportment," \* and those who felt compelled to leave his ministry write of him as "a man of amiable temper and correct moral conduct." †

The new congregation, known as the New Meeting, formed to preserve the evangelical faith of the founders of the Old Meeting, was visited occasionally by orthodox evangelical ministers, one Mr. Young being there in 1743, ‡ and Mr. Walkden in 1746, ‡ and soon so increased that the need of a more commodious place of worship was felt. Whereupon Mr. Taylor gave a plot of land in Barrack Street, whereon a Meeting-house, capable of accommodating three hundred persons, was built. The people also began to look out for a minister, and had several who stayed for only a short time. One was a Mr. Gardner, a student from London, who was invited to visit them again with a view to settling as their pastor. A copy of the letter inviting him is still in the Church book, dated April 5th, 1747, "signed by order and appointment of the Church, Samuel

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\* Thompson MS. Records of Nonconformity.

† Paper formerly belonging to Miss Rooker now in the Church Book.

‡ Minutes of Congregational Fund Board.

Darby, Stephen Stone, John Downe, Daniel Taylor." He declined on the ground that he desired to continue his studies for another year, and died of consumption without ever taking a pastorate. The Rev. John Lavington (son of the famous Rev. Mr. Lavington, of Exeter) afterwards of Ottery St. Mary, where he kept an Academy for students for the ministry, which was afterwards transferred to Bridport under Mr. Rooker, supplied the pulpit for a year, but preferred to settle near his venerable father. On his removal to Ottery, the Rev. James Rooker, a native of Walsall, educated under Mr. Kirkpatrick, at Bedworth, was invited to preach; and did so with such acceptance, that he was called to the pastorate in 1750, and on October 16th, 1751, was ordained. Nothing could have been better for the Church than to have such a man for its minister—a man of good education, sound sense, sterling principle, and full of evangelical zeal. His preaching attracted increasing congregations, many additions were made to the fellowship, and discipline was carefully and firmly exercised. Not content with the labours of his pastorate, Mr. Rooker sought to do a work, without which it would have been, humanly speaking, impossible for many of the struggling evangelical congregations in the West to have been supplied with a suitable ministry. In 1765 he took over the Academy, started by the Rev. John Lavington, at Ottery St. Mary, in 1751, for the education of young men for the ministry. It was no light thing to undertake. Evangelical nonconformity had almost everywhere else, as at Bridport, come out of a great struggle, but not without loss. The aristocratic members of the older nonconformity—the men of rank, position and wealth, had almost all been left behind to gradually, as the event showed, become Unitarian, or be absorbed into the National Church. The evangelical congregations were made up of farmers, tradesmen, and "the lower orders," as it was the fashion to call people who worked for wages, with a sprinkling of professional men and yeomen. Such were almost all the people admitted to the church at Bridport for a hundred years. Nowhere was this change more marked than in the Academies. To the older institutions—to Mr. Hallett, at Exeter; Mr. Grove, at Taunton; Dr. Dodderidge, of Northampton; and others—



noblemen and gentlemen sent their sons to be educated, and the large sums they were able to pay, made it possible for the teachers to deal generously with poor ministerial students, when such desired to enter. But the new Academies were filled with young men, who had indeed the grace of God in their hearts, but little cash in their pockets, and no friends able to help them. Indeed it may be taken for granted that, but for the Congregational Fund Board, which voted £14 a year for each student, approved by them, few would have been able to be educated at all. Mr. Rooker made no money out of his students, on the contrary, he was probably a poorer man for the work. But he got something dearer to true men than money. The records of other churches show that a succession of young ministers was sent out, most of whom became useful, and some famous. The work was so useful that it has never been allowed to die. After Mr. Rooker's death, it was continued by the Rev. Thomas Reader, at Taunton, and afterwards by the Rev. James Small, at Axminster, and is now known as the Western College, Plymouth. In this work he seems to have had, as he deserved, the sympathy of his people. In her will, dated September, 1770, Miss F. Bythewood directed her trustees to pay the interest of £25 yearly to Mr. Rooker "so long as he is the tutor of an Academy for ministers." This was in addition to £50 left to the Church. And she probably represented the feeling of the people generally. In 1776 the old chapel, which had long been too small, was taken down and another erected on the same site, to hold five hundred persons. After thirty years of happy, fruitful ministry, he was smitten down by paralysis and died in 1780, honoured and revered by all who knew him.

On March 15th of that year, the Rev. Peter Fabyan, one of Dr. Dodderidge's students, who had been minister of Newton Abbot for the previous seventeen years, accepted a call to be Mr. Rooker's co-pastor. By August of the same year, he was sole pastor,\* though what was the exact date of Mr. Rooker's death there is no record to show. Mr. Fabyan did not, however, continue minister here very long, "being advanced in life, his

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\* Church Book.

preaching did not prove acceptable, and he had some dispute with his people respecting the singing. He was specially attached to grave and solemn tunes. In consequence he left them (March, 1786), and died at Ashburton, his native town, in the same year." \*

May 4th, 1786, ought to be a red-letter day with this church, for it was the day in which, under divine direction, they invited the Rev. John Saltern to become their minister. He accepted, and soon after commenced a memorable pastorate. Twice he had the pleasure of seeing the chapel become too small for the congregation, and of seeing it enlarged in 1798 and 1815. At the close of the last and during the early part of this century, a great wave of missionary zeal passed over the evangelical churches of Dorset and throughout England. During the previous half century, they had been recovering from the effects of the Arian trouble, and now they were more at leisure to think of others and stronger to help them. Mr. Saltern was filled with this zeal. He was one of the founders, and first subscribers, and earliest directors of the London Missionary Society, formed 1795. He was early associated with the Dorset Association of Congregational Churches, established to promote the preaching of the gospel in the villages and destitute parts of the county. On the formation of the Home Missionary Society (now the Church Aid and Home Missionary Society) in 1819, he was one of the earliest members of the committee, and one of its most generous supporters. Not content with this organized effort, he acted as a Home Missionary himself, conducting services at Loders and Shipton, preaching every Tuesday evening at the one place, and on Thursday at the other ; sometimes, undaunted by the weather, riding through sleet and snow to keep his appointments. These efforts were not carried out without opposition : On one occasion, at least, on attempting to preach at an adjacent village, he was assailed and pelted by the people. As the church had sympathised with Mr. Rooker in his work, so now they seconded Mr. Saltern's efforts to carry the gospel into obscure places. Here are three entries in the church book, that show that when

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\* Walter Wilson MS.

they had a good leader, they were good followers.

“November 7th, 1798.—This day the Church met to take into consideration the state of the people at Abbotsbury, when Mr. James Hart and Mr. George Gollop were deputed by the Church to carry on the worship of God at Abbotsbury the next Sabbath. At the same time the four Deacons with Mr. Symes, Mr. Robinson and Mr. James Hart, were chosen a Committee to carry on this work, and that the Committee was to be open to all the men members. Mr. John Haddon was desired likewise to engage with the brethren before mentioned as a Village Reader.”

“August 13th, 1799.—The Church met this evening, when Mr. Symes and Mr. James Hart were nominated (with two persons that may be chosen at Dorchester and two at Weymouth) to whom the lease should be given by Mr. Watson, of Abbotsbury, of a house for five years for the purpose of carrying out the worship of God in Abbotsbury. It was agreed at the same time to unite with Christian friends at Dorchester and Weymouth to put the said house into a convenient form for the worship of God. The expense was £31 8s. 1d., which sum was paid by friends at Bridport, Weymouth and Poole”

“October 5th, 1801.—A Committee of the Church met this evening and agreed to give—Northover, of Swyer, four guineas for the use of his house in which to carry on the worship of God for one year, from the sixth day of October, 1801, to the sixth day of October, 1802.”

Many converts were gathered as the result of these pious efforts and added to the fellowship of the church.

These interests and efforts in so many directions do not appear to have lessened Mr. Saltern's interest in his own people. The Church Book bears witness to the jealous care with which the good name of the members was regarded. He believed that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.” Warning, rebuke, censure, and, in the last extremity, excommunication are repeatedly recorded. There is not a word in it about the enlargement of the chapel on either occasion, or what it cost. There is no attempt to glory in outward progress. But there is constant anxiety about the Christian character of the members. Mr. Saltern

was a good preacher ; earnest, vigorous, but with a vein tenderness, that made him dear to the sorrowful and weary, who are so many in every congregation. To all his other qualities he added that of a good visitor. No wonder they loved and honoured him. At Midsummer, 1828, the Rev. John Wills, of Wareham, became his co-pastor. Early in 1831, Mr. Saltern wrote : " My dear Flock,—My advancing age and consequent infirmities advise me that it is my duty to relinquish my part of the pastoral office over you, which it is my intention to do, by divine permission, at Midsummer next ensuing, which will then have lasted forty-five years." But even after he had ceased to be the pastor, he preached occasionally until his death, October 29th, 1834, aged 81.

Mr. Wills was sole pastor from Midsummer, 1834.\* He is described, by one who knew him, as " the most remarkable preacher of his day in Dorset" . . . " in Bridport, his ministry was acceptable and effective, and he lived in the affection and esteem of his people." During his ministry the chapel was again greatly improved. He was, however, a martyr to insomnia, and, after thirteen years work, single-handed, he felt that he needed the assistance of a co-pastor, who was found in the person of the Rev. Thomas Wallace, of Petersfield, who entered on his duties on May 5th, 1844. The arrangement was that Mr. Wills should preach on Sunday mornings, and Mr. Wallace in the afternoon and evening. It was not, however, of long continuance. For some reason, which is now probably and happily forgotten, Mr. Wallace left Mr. Wills, and opened a chapel, called Salem Chapel, about the beginning of 1845. This chapel appears to have been closed, on Mr. Wallace's removal, about 1850.

On November 2nd, 1845, the Rev. J. W. Wyld received an unanimous invitation to become Mr. Wills' co-pastor, and, on December 7th, Mr. Wills announced from the pulpit his resignation, in consequence of continued bodily affliction. Three days afterwards Mr. Wyld was publicly ordained. Mr. Wyld, who was an extremely popular preacher, resigned, March 17th, 1851,

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\* For fuller account of Rev. J. Wills, see Wareham.



on his acceptance of the pastorate of Albion Chapel, Southampton.

He was succeeded by the Rev. John Knox Stallybrass, from Dorchester, in March, 1852. "Here he spent, probably, the happiest years of his ministerial course. He threw himself with energy into the oversight of a large congregation, took a leading part in the public affairs of the town, and was in constant request both as preacher and lecturer." \* "Soon after his marriage he was called to Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham,"\* and in consequence resigned July 16th, 1856.

In December of the same year, the Rev. John Rogers, late of Bedford Chapel, London, was invited to visit Bridport, and occupy the pulpit for three Sundays. He had been a most successful minister, at Lowestoft and Rendham, in Suffolk, and afterwards at New Tottenham Court Chapel, and Bedford Chapel, London. Of the latter church, he was the first minister, and was the means of organising it, and building noble schools. But his health failing, he had been compelled to take a year's rest. It was with some misgiving that he contemplated the resumption of the work he had begun at such an early age as to be called "the boy preacher," and when he received and accepted (February, 1857) the unanimous invitation to settle here, "he wished his connection with the church to be regarded . . . more as an experiment than as a settlement." † From the first there was never any doubt that he was just the man for this important post, which he left, distinctly stronger and better, in every way, than he found it. He found the chapel in Barrack Street unworthy of the congregation, and inadequate to accommodate the growing activities of the community. He, therefore, suggested the erection of a more convenient structure, with commodious school-rooms, in a prominent situation. Accordingly, the present admirable site was purchased, from the Corporation, for £800, and a noble chapel, to seat one thousand hearers, was built, with a large school-room and infant-room in the rear, at a total cost of £3,605 6s. 4d. The foundation stone was laid by Samuel Morley, Esq., May 2nd, 1859. The

\* Congregational Year Book, 1881.

† Church Book.

school was opened February, 1860, and the chapel, May 24th. Before the close of the opening meeting the whole of the money had been raised, and the Treasurer had a balance in hand, so that Mr. Rogers had the unusual pleasure of stating that the collections, announced for the following Sunday, would not be required. Soon, however, it was found that the school-room had become too small, and another room was added. Five additional class-rooms were subsequently erected, all of which were opened free of debt. A new organ was placed in the chapel, in 1862, at a cost of £300, and another in the school, in 1868. The ministry of Mr. Rogers was greatly blessed, especially to young people, and he is still remembered with gratitude by many. He was also very useful to the other, and especially the poorer churches in the county, and served them for several years as Secretary to the County Association. Once more his health broke down under his work, and, in the winter of 1866, and spring of 1867, his people urged him to seek entire rest, which he did for three months. Having partially recovered, he returned to his beloved charge, to struggle against increasing weakness and pain, until on June 24th, 1871, he entered into his rest. He was buried in the Bridport Cemetery, most of the leading people of the town showing their respect for him, by following him to the grave, over which the Sunday School has erected a monument to his memory. A beautiful marble tablet was placed in the chapel by the Church and congregation. "Beloved as a man, honoured as a minister, full of faith and good works, Mr. Rogers died as he had lived, in the peace of Christ." His record is on high.

He was followed by the Rev. F. J. Austin, from Newport, Isle of Wight, who remained ten years, leaving for Derby, 1881, and is now minister of East Grimstead.

In 1882, the Rev. W. J. Bain, of Bilston, accepted an invitation to the pastorate and for nine years he worked, as few men have been able to work, labouring night and day for the good of the town, and giving ungrudging, and much prized, services to the churches of the county far and near. In order to reach a class of people, not usually found in any place of worship, he commenced services, on Sunday evenings, outside the chapel,



when the weather permitted, and at other times in the school. "All who came in contact with Mr. Bain, recognised in him a man who 'stood four square to all.' His principals were fixed, and he had the courage of his convictions. . . . On the platform and in the pulpit he was a vigorous thinker and sensible (often eloquent) speaker, identifying himself fully with all progressive movements." Mrs. Bain was a true helpmeet for her husband. To the great regret of the people he removed in 1891 to Keswick, where he died, after a very short illness, March 20th, 1893.

His successor, the present minister, is the Rev. James Menzies, late of Redhill, Surrey. The congregation and school are well maintained, and there is great and growing activity on the part of the people. In connection with the school a new infant room has been recently erected. O.

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## BROADSTONE.

This rising place, a hamlet in the parish of Canford Magna, owes its existence mainly to the opening of a railway station. Previously it was a wild, dreary district, with but a few scattered cottages, and known as "Corfe Hills." As it is now an important railway junction, and healthily situated, it has rapidly grown, and will probably attract a considerable residential population.

The introduction of the gospel must be traced to the Rev. T. Durant and his friends at Skinner Street, Poole. Driving on one occasion with Mr. Browning to Sturminster Marshall, where a week-night service was held, as they passed along Corfe Hill, they met a boy, whom they found entirely destitute of religious knowledge. Among the questions put to him was this, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" To which he replied, "No, I never heard of Him." The good men thought and talked seriously on the subject, and finally resolved to start a Sunday School in the place. Volunteers offered their services, and met with considerable success. After a while the

cottage, in which the school was held, was also opened for divine worship, afternoon and evening. The preachers and teachers were mostly from Skinner Street, and occasionally a teacher was also the preacher. Mention may be made of the late Mr. W. J. Buckley, and of Mr. T. Atkins, who joined heartily in the work. Mr. H. Brown, a shopman in the employ of Mr. T. Whicher, grocer, was among the first of this earnest band ; he is still living at Bournemouth, and not long since preached at Broadstone. Mr. George Bond followed, and for some years gave devoted service.

In 1849, Mr. W. Waterman returned from a visit to America, where he had profited by the ministry of Dr. Lyman Beecher, and joined the Presbyterian Church under his care in the city of Cincinnati, and being desirous of doing something for the Master, especially in a village; he assisted Mr. Bond at Broadstone, and the two worked cordially together. After Mr. Bond's removal from Poole, Mr. Waterman carried on the work, aided by Mr. Scutt, an apprentice to Mr. Osment. They usually walked to Broadstone and back, about seven or eight miles altogether ; on two consecutive Sundays, owing to heavy rains, no children were present ; the third Sunday being also wet, they thought it useless to take the journey, but hearing afterwards that children had come that day and found the door closed, they resolved henceforward to be in their place whatever the state of the weather. After the removal of Mr. Scutt, who had been very helpful in the singing, the vacant place was filled by Mr. Stephens.

The meeting place being too small for the worshippers, and much needing repair, it was decided, about the year 1853, to erect a new building. Messrs. W. and A. Waterman offered a site, and £5 to start with, they also did gratuitously most of the hauling of material ; the people cheerfully gave what assistance they could, especially in the way of labour ; the walls being of mud, and much of the work done free of charge, the actual cost was small, only about £50. The Rev. E. R. Conder, M.A., of Poole, preached at the opening, and his students supplied the pulpit for some time with much acceptance. The school was carried on in the old building, till the lease expired, and soon afterwards it was taken down. At one time there were as

many as 70 children, but the number has been reduced by the opening of schools in connection with the Church of England, and the Wesleyans.

On the day the chapel was opened £30 of its cost was paid off, and some months afterwards, the sum of £10, still due to the contractor, Mr. Sharland, senior, was generously paid by Mr. Waterman.

During the absence of this gentleman in Canada, the efficient services of Mr. Harker were secured, till he became Superintendent of the Sunday School at Poole. At this time, and onwards, kind help was readily rendered by Messrs. Llewellyn, Jesse Curtis, James Habgood, and Anstey, all of Poole.

For some years Professor George Waterman was resident at Broadstone, and frequently took the services and taught in the school. Even after afflicted with blindness, he lectured and preached with much profit to his hearers, his cousin helping in the service, by reading the Scriptures and giving out the hymns. Failing health compelled him to leave, in order to be near his medical attendant.

In 1891, as it was difficult to obtain supplies from Poole, the Rev. J. Ossian Davies undertook to send them from Bourne-mouth two Sundays in the month, Mr. Waterman finding supplies for the other services, and this arrangement still prevails. During Mr. Waterman's late illness, from which happily he has recovered, valued assistance was given by Mr. Walter Vine of Wimborne. It is nearly 50 years since Mr. Waterman began to teach at Broadstone, and for many years it has been his place of residence. The Sunday school, and the services have been sustained chiefly by his watchful care, and unwearied effort; Mrs. Waterman has also fully shared in these works of faith, and labours of love.

The chapel being private property, and somewhat out of the way, a freehold site in a central situation has been purchased, with the view of erecting a new place of worship. The attendance is now fairly good; the Rev. J. Ault, C. L. Newell, Esq., and others, who are willing and able to help in various ways, have

recently settled in the place; thus the prospect is bright with hope, and our friends have reason to thank God, and take courage. D.

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## BROADWINDSOR.

In the beginning of the year 1820, a Mr. Cole, who had come from Bath to reside here, opened his house for services, which were conducted by students from the Rev. James Small's Academy at Axminster, and welcomed and encouraged by a few of the respectable inhabitants.

It must not, however, be supposed that Mr. Cole and his friends introduced Nonconformity into Broadwindsor. The first non-conformist here was the Rev. John Pinney, who became Vicar in the place of the celebrated Dr. Thomas Fuller—the author of “English Worthies”—when he was deprived of the living during the troublous times, about 1650. Mr. Pinney was what was called at the Restoration, an intruder, and Dr. Fuller was by law entitled to return and dispossess him. Intending to avail himself of his right, he visited the place, and attended a service in the Church, and heard Mr. Pinney preach. So impressed was he with the value of his ministry that he told the people “he would not deprive them of such a man” and withdrew all claim to the living. This was in 1660. But Dr. Fuller's magnanimity did not serve Mr. Pinney long. For in January, 1661, he was removed and Edmund Sly was appointed vicar. After his ejection he appears to have retired to Bettiscombe, where his descendants still live and hold honorable positions. As opportunity offered he preached sometimes in his own house, sometimes at Crewkerne, where the services were held in a place “called Tayle Mill,” and at Wayford, “in the house of one Widow Darby,” where some 200 people were accustomed to attend.\* His labours involved him in many troubles. He was fined, excommunicated, and cast into prison. But none of these things daunted him. On Charles II's proclamation of Indulgence he

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\*Cod. Tensioni, 141.



took out a licence,—dated April 30th, 1672,—for his house at Bettiscombe, and another authorising him to be a Presbyterian teacher in his own house there. On the withdrawal of the Indulgence and the renewed outbreak of persecution he was driven out of the Kingdom, being prosecuted under 35 Elizabeth, and went to Ireland, where he succeeded Dr. Harrison as pastor of a dissenting congregation in Dublin. Here he remained ten years. On liberty being granted in England in 1688, he returned and settled among his old parishoners and became, in all probability, the founder of the meeting-house at Blackdown, and here he remained until his death.

The services commenced in the days of persecution appear to have been continued for many years, for on July 10th, 1705, we find “the Sawpit of Matthew Colmer, Yeoman. in Broadwindsor,” licensed as a Presbyterian place of worship. How long, or with what result the work was carried on, we do not know.

The later years of the last century, and the earlier ones of this were marked by great zeal and activity on the part of the churches of Dorset, and not least by those in the West of the county. Chapels were built or services commenced in private houses, &c., at Powerstock (1797), Woodmill (1780-90), Netherbury (1786), Stoke Abbot (1786), and in January, 1796, preaching was recommenced (now named Independent) in a “house belonging to James Lake, in Broadwindsor,” and two years later in “the house occupied by Joseph Munden, in Little Windsor.” In 1815, the services were held in houses in the possession of John Poor and George Trenchard. These may have been only week-night or occasional services. But they prepared the way for the work begun in Mr. Coles’ house in 1820, where the services were attended by from 100 to 200 hearers. We read soon after “this village has undergone a pleasing change, having been very lately a spot distinguished for vice and contempt of religion.”\* But all was not so pleasing. The students from Axminster had sometimes strange stories to tell of ill-treatment by the way, and one of them, Mr. John Allen (father of the Rev. J. P.

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\* Home Missionary Mag., Oct. 1821.

Allen, M.A., late principal of the Bristol Institute), on one occasion, very nearly lost his life.\* The work, however, went on, in spite of occasional outbreaks of brutality, encouraged and helped by Mr. and Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Burford, and others, so that a new chapel was needed, which was built on land belonging to Mr. Israel Jones, and opened June 21st, 1821. The opening collection realized £46. At this time the evening congregation was reported as being 200, and the Sunday scholars thirty. Two years later a church was organized, and the Lord's Supper celebrated for the first time, June 8th, 1823. In 1828, one of Mr. Small's students, Rev. James Standerwick, a member of an ancient family, long resident at Broadway, became the first minister, but left at the end of a year, being called to re-establish the extinct cause at Dulverton. The next minister, of whom we have any record, was the Rev. James Brown, who signs the Church Minutes from 1831 to 1833. He came from Waytown. He was followed by the Rev. F. Smith, who settled here for a brief pastorate.† The Rev. Horatio Groube, of Homerton College, settled here in 1838, and was ordained, March 27th, 1839. In the early part of 1841 he lost his wife, and shortly afterwards he became one of the earliest emigrants to New Zealand, whence he was driven at the outbreak of the Maori War, and died in Australia, 1889.

After his removal, the Home Missionary Society were asked to make this place one of their stations, and send a Missionary, which they did in 1841, when the Rev. James Cheney, from the Cotton End Academy, was appointed. He was ordained, October 12th, 1843. On December 31st, 1844, the ground on which the chapel stood was conveyed to trustees by Mr. Israel Jones. And, in 1845, Mr. Cheney was instrumental in building the school-room, for which he collected a good part of the cost, and which was opened on Good Friday of that year. In 1854 he removed to Portland. "The Rev. James Edmunds, pastor of the Independent Church, at Burnham, Bucks, supplied February to July, 1855."‡

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\* Cong. Year Book, 1855, p. 174.

† See under Charmouth.

‡ Minute Book.



His successor was the Rev. Stephen Bater, another student from the Cotton End Academy, who settled here in 1855. At the time of his settlement the congregation had dwindled to about 60, and the income was so reduced that the directors of the Home Missionary Society had grouped the work at Waytown with that of Broadwindsor. Mr. Bater brought great zeal, untiring energy, and much good practical sense to his work, and the result was speedily apparent. Not content with preaching at Broadwindsor and Waytown, he opened services in cottages, and farmhouses, in seven or eight other villages and hamlets, and was unwearyed in his visitation of the people in their own homes. The work grew to such an extent that he was unable to overtake it all alone. A friend provided the means, and an assistant was engaged. In 1861, the Rev. F. Smith, who had retired from the active ministry at Charmouth, settled down at Broadwindsor, where he gave Mr. Bater, and the villages, devoted service, generally preaching twice on Sunday, and at least once in the week. Mr. Bater's work was greatly blessed, and he is still remembered as a model village pastor by many of the older members. Among his converts was the late Mr. Thomas Haydon, proprietor of the Greenham Flax Mills, who, on his conversion, sold his hunting horses, and became a most devoted member of the Church. Before his death he conveyed an amount of consols, costing £2,000, to trustees, with instructions to pay over the income to the Dorset Association for the benefit of the work of God in the county. Shortly before the close of Mr. Bater's ministry, Waytown and Netherbury were, at his request, dissociated from Broadwindsor. With health broken down by his excessive labours, Mr. Bater retired in 1863. After a period of enforced inaction on account of his health, he settled at Bishop's Hull, near Taunton, whence he removed successively to Marden, Cuckfield, Taunton, and Wood Green, and now lives honoured and esteemed at Boscombe.

In 1863, Mrs. Mary Jones (widow of Mr. Israel Jones), conveyed the house, in which she then lived, to trustees, as a residence for the minister.

Mr. Alnwick succeeded Mr. Bater, but did not remain more

than a few months, and was followed by Rev W. Mellonie, who came here in 1864. He married the widow of Mr. Haydon mentioned above, and resided at Greenham. During his pastorate, which ended in 1868, the chapel was reseated at the cost of £230.

Rev. F. Vaughan became the minister in 1869 and remained until 1884. He was an earnest and successful worker, and a great temperance advocate, in which capacity he extended his labours over Dorset and the Southern Counties, being organizing secretary of an association covering that area. On his leaving he removed to Puddletown, and thence to Boscombe, where he founded a new church. He now lives retired at West Lulworth, where he is not idle, but is a great blessing to the neighbourhood. It was during Mr. Vaughan's ministry that the church lost, by his death, the invaluable help of the Rev. F. Smith, in 1873. The subsequent ministers have been, Rev. S. Haymes, who came from Spilsby, Lincolnshire, in 1884, and left in 1888, and died soon afterwards at Weymouth. He was succeeded by Rev. W. Robinson, from Deptford, who, finding the long journeys required in a work extending from Stoke Abbot to Ven too much for his strength, accepted an invitation to Longham in the following year, and has since removed to Leicester. In 1890, the Rev. G. Robertson, the present minister, came from Curry Rivel, and has proved himself to be the very man for the place. His wise, earnest, and active ministry has revived the best traditions of the place, though his work has been crippled by the entire failure of the local industry, which has diminished and impoverished the population.

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### CASTLE HILL.

The Act of Uniformity, which deprived so many other parishes in Dorset of their ministers, was the means of removing from Buckland Newton three clergymen—the Rev. John Weeks, the Rev. T. Boaden, and the Rev. Mr. Hall. The Rev. John Weeks (the Vicar), like many of the other ejected ministers, was a young man. He was the nephew of the Rev. Samuel Hardy, of Poole,

and was one of the most popular and successful preachers in the West of England. Driven away from Buckland Newton, he at first preached, as opportunity was afforded, at North Cadbury, North Cheriton and Dunkerton, and eventually settled in Bristol, where he gathered a congregation of 1,500 persons. He was several times imprisoned for nonconformity—twice for a period of six months each, and he also suffered in other ways, his services being disturbed and the congregations broken up by the magistrates and their officials. But undismayed and undiscouraged, he continued his ministry until his death, which took place November 23rd, 1698, at the age of 65. The Rev. T. Boaden, who lived at Knapp's Hill, and married Miss Frances Bartlett, in 1659, appears to have been his curate, as was also, in all probability, the Rev. Mr. Hall. What became of the curates after 1662 is not known.

With the removal of these ministers, nonconformity appears to have ceased, at least, in an organised form, unless it was kept alive for a while by one who owned a name conspicuously and honourably associated with Dorset nonconformity—the Rev. John Devenish, who had been ejected from Weston in Somerset, and who took out a license to be a Presbyterian teacher at Pulham, September 5th, 1672. For 160 years, we have no evidence that the “pestilent efforts” of Nonconformist preachers, as one of the Bishops of Exeter called them, interfered with the work of the ministers of the Established Church. At the end of that time, that is to say, during the period of home missionary enthusiasm, attention was turned to this district, when it was found to be exceedingly dark and benighted spiritually. The Home Missionary Society, in 1836, sent a missionary, the Rev. George Sandford, who visited from house to house through several villages, and commenced holding services in private houses—Round Chimneys, Glanvilles Wootton, being the first. These services were felt to meet a real need and were well attended, and resulted in much good being done among a poor, scattered, and neglected people. In November, 1837, a house at Duntish (Castle Hill) was obtained, as being central to the four villages of Glanvilles Wootton, Mappowder, Buckland Newton, and

Middlemarsh, containing together, within a radius of three miles, a population of upwards of 2,000 souls. "Here, large and increasing congregations," says a contemporary record, "have been brought under the sound of the gospel, and great attention has been paid to the words of eternal life. Two Sabbath schools have been erected, which together contain 100 children." The experiment having proved so successful it was decided to erect a chapel, on a spot of ground given by Mr. Gray, of Duntish, at a cost of £300. The friends were encouraged by the attendance at the services and the interest taken in the project by W. Williams, Esq., of Castle Hill House. The corner stone of the chapel was laid September 12th, 1838, and the building was used, in an unfinished state, for the first time on December 2nd. On Wednesday, June 5th, 1839, the chapel was formally opened, and the Rev. G. Sandford was publicly ordained to the ministry. Very large congregations assembled, including friends from Sherborne, Dorchester, Blandford, Cerne, and Stalbridge, so that the morning service had to be held in the open air. Rain drove the people under cover for dinner, which was served in a farm house close by. In the evening the Rev. T. Durant preached in the chapel, and the Rev. J. Anderson preached to an overflow congregation in Mr. Old's farm house. The day's collections amounted to £25, leaving £50 to be raised to clear the chapel of debt. In December of the same year, Mr. Sandford was taken ill, and died of consumption, May 15th, 1840, aged 28.

During Mr. Sandford's illness the Rev. John Herbert was sent by the Home Missionary Society to fill his place, and he remained until December, 1840. He was succeeded by the Rev. John Dorrington, who was in charge from January 10th, 1841, to September, 1846, when he was withdrawn by the Home Missionary Society, the Committee of which "declined henceforth to sustain the cause." The church, thus left without a pastor, and unable to provide such an income as would justify the members in inviting one who had to live of the gospel, to settle among them, invited Mr. T. Penn, a draper of Sherborne, and Mr. Hallett, of whose services they had had some previous experience,



to undertake to supply the pulpit (the services in private houses in the outlying villages having apparently by this time been discontinued), which they did. Mr. Penn, and Mr. J. B. Rawlings, another Sherborne tradesman, who had been a great friend to the place from its foundation, succeeded in 1852. In 1856, Mr. Penn left the neighbourhood, for Hitchin, Herts, and afterwards settled at Hemyock, Devon, and Alresford, as Baptist minister, and his place as a supply for Castle Hill was taken by Mr. Dennis, of Shaftesbury.

About 1857, an arrangement was made with the Rev. Mr. Gunning, a Baptist minister, living without charge, at Cerne, to conduct the services. This arrangement continued until 1860 when, owing to some disagreement between him and some of the friends of the place, arising apparently out of his seeking another charge, he left, and some of the congregation with him. Henly Baptist Chapel was built by the seceders, and there Mr. Gunning continued his ministry. The division was, and has ever since continued to be, a source of weakness.

The congregation that remained appealed for counsel and assistance, to the Dorset Association of Congregational Churches, who made a grant of £5, which was to be paid to the Rev. F. Beckley, to enable him to send out preachers from Sherborne. This does not seem to have been satisfactory, for we next find the Rev. T. Sissons, now the well-known and much-honoured minister of Wycliffe Chapel, Stepney, preaching for a short time. His sermons and lectures were very striking, and are still remembered. He soon, however, removed to Corfe Castle, where he was assistant to the Rev. G. Hubbard.

In 1862, the Dorset Association resolved to consider Castle Hill as an evangelistic station, putting it successively under the superintendence of Rev. F. Beckley, Rev. J. T. Smith, of Sydling, and finally of the minister of Cerne for the time being.

In 1865 the old chapel, showing signs of approaching collapse, was sold to the lord of the manor, Mr. Minet, for £100, and the site exchanged for the site of the present chapel. About this time an arrangement was made with Mr. Wm. Diment, a pious layman, living at Cerne, to undertake the charge as lay-pastor.



He continued to preach on Sundays and visit and conduct the week-night services with much acceptance until his death in 1877.

Since that time the Sunday services have been supplied by zealous laymen, except on one Sunday in the month, when the minister has come from Cerne. He, also, conducts the week-night services, and visits among the people. A Sunday School and Temperance Society are vigorously carried on, and have been much indebted to Mr. Isaac Gray, of Knapps Hill, and his son, Mr. Percy Gray, for both pecuniary assistance and personal service. O.

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### CERNE ABBAS.

This little town, nestling in a valley among lofty chalk hills was formerly a prosperous place. It had a glove factory, extensive tanning works, and at one time from eighty to one hundred women and children were employed in winding silk for a firm at Sherborne; but these, and other industries, are now extinct. The town is situated on a main road from Dorchester to Sherborne and Yeovil, but the opening of the railway, some miles off, diverted traffic, and helped seriously in its decline; this has been accelerated by the agricultural depression, from which the neighbourhood has specially suffered. The population sank from 1,164 in 1871, to 834 in 1891. The town derives its name from the stream that flows through it, and from the ruined Abbey. This was first built in the ninth century, in memory of Edward the Martyr; little more now remains than the gatehouse and barn. The colossal figure of a man, cut out of the turf on the adjacent hill, and widely known as "The Cerne Giant," still puzzles antiquaries as to its origin and meaning.

Though Cerne has not the honour of supplying one of the Confessors of 1662, several worthy men were ejected from the vicinity, viz.: John Moore, from Holnest; John Weeks, from Buckland Newton; Thomas Boulton, from West Compton (1664); three from Dorchester on the south; and two from Sherborne on the north. The following ejected ministers dwelt near, at least

for a time, about the year 1669, viz. : Philip Lamb, from Bere Regis, at Alton Pancras, an adjoining parish ; William Benn, from Dorchester, at Maiden Newton, five miles off ; John Devenish, from Weston, Somerset, at Pulham, a few miles to the north ; Josiah Banger, ejected from Broad Hembury, Devon, resided on his estate at Lillington, and held services, as often as practicable, at Hermitage, a village three or four miles north-west of Cerne, at the house of J. Fox. To this place, doubtless, the Cerne Puritans mostly resorted for worship.

On the occasion of King Charles's Indulgence, a license was taken out for "the house of John Dammer, in Cerne, Dorset, for a Presbyterian meeting place, May 16th, 1672," and the following month a license was granted to "James Hallett to be a Presbyterian teacher in the house of John Dammer." John Dammer was probably the elder brother of Edward Dammer (see Dorchester), and a member of the Puritan family at Godmanstone, about three miles from Cerne, where he seems to have resided till his death in 1709. It is likely that he was among the earliest adherents of the cause at Cerne. Mr. James Hallett was one of the 38 Dorset ministers, who, May 10th, 1672, sent a letter of thanks to the King for the liberty granted.

In Dr. Neal's returns of ministers and churches in 1715 (with additions afterwards), three names are given as the ministers of Cerne, Robert Sims, Richard Orchard, and Bernard Banger. Robert Sims seems to have been here in 1715, but we can gather no further information about him. Richard Orchard seems to have been minister at Waytown in 1715, and he left Cerne to become pastor of a secession church at Weymouth (see Weymouth). Bernard Banger was probably a son of a Josiah Banger, of Lillington. He was associated with Mr. Banger, Mr. John Copplestone, and Mr. Thomas Coad, in conducting services at Long Bredy, where the house of Bartholomew Paine was licensed for Presbyterian worship, October 3rd, 1704, and a Meeting-House existed in 1715.

James Madgwick, probably brother of Wm. Madgwick, minister at Poole, who had taken out a license for divine worship in his own house at Lytchett Minster, 1719, was resident at Cerne in

1722 and 1729, as appears by Wm. Madgwick's Baptismal Register, but whether he officiated as minister is not known.

With regard to the meeting place in the early part of the 18th century, it was most probably in a house adjacent to the present chapel premises, northwards. Some years ago, when the upper part of this house was taken down the mason found in a large room, texts of Scripture in large Old English letters, painted on the walls, one of which was this, "O give thanks unto the Lord, &c." The texts were overlaid with several coats of whitewash, hiding them from view. An effort to preserve them was vain, as they crumbled to pieces. It was the opinion of those who saw the room, some of whom are still living, that it had been used as a place of worship. There can be little doubt that in this "upper room" the godly people of Cerne met to worship God according to their conscience. In 1729 the late Chapel was built. Among the licenses issued that year we find the following: "102, Newly Erected Meeting House, Cerne Abbas, Presbyterians, 17th July, 1729."

John Bulstrode, who had been pastor at Milborne Port for three years, removed to Cerne in 1730, but his stay was brief. Mr. Malden followed, whose pastorate ceased in 1756. John Smart next became minister, and was ordained October 15th, the same year. He remained the pastor till his decease, and was buried in Cerne churchyard, November 28th, 1774. He gave by will £25 towards the support of the minister for the time being at Cerne, and the like sum to Whitchurch, Hants.

Miss Frances Bythewood, who died at Bridport, gave, by will dated September 22nd, 1770, £25 for the benefit of the minister at Cerne. It is probable that this bequest has been lost, as there is no evidence that it was ever paid over to the Cerne people. This lady evidently belonged to the family of Bythewood, tanners, who were among the founders of the Old Meeting House, Wareham, in 1694, and she bequeathed sums to seven of her relations in Wareham, who, as far as we can judge, were all attendants at the Old Meeting.

After Mr. Smart's death, William Varder, a native of the town,

and probably brother of Daniel Varder, Independent minister of Sherborne, came home from Salisbury, and ministered to the people for a few months, when death terminated his labours.

William Harvey settled here in 1779. The late pastor, D. Thomas, affirmed that he had seen a letter from Mr. Harvey, dated April 12th, 1779, accepting the invitation to Cerne. It may be added that the Church records of the 18th century have all been lost, making it difficult to compile a complete and accurate account. Very valuable, though scanty, information has been found in the Walter Wilson M.SS., Dr. Williams' Library. Mr. Harvey resigned his charge from ill health in 1801. The Congregational Fund Board assisted the ministers and church at Cerne, almost without intermission, from 1739 to 1800, the grant being usually £5 per annum. Joseph Lamb from Weymouth, followed in 1801, and during his stay, filled the office of Secretary to the County Association. Sydling was also under his care in 1802. Mr. Lamb removed in 1804 to the "Upper Meeting," Westbury.

Various small sums were bequeathed or given in the last century for the benefit of the minister, and these are now represented by £157 16s. 5d. in Consols. The donors were Mrs. Woods, £25; Mr. Smart, £25; Mr. Bunter, £20; Mr. William Petty, £50. In 1785, the following were proposed as Trustees for these funds: John Hodges, Cerne; Henry Petty, Evershot; Jos. Bennett, Cerne; John Petty, Chantmarle; Rob. Porter, Downfroome; James Homer, Cerne; John Reed, Sidlen; Levi Groves, Junr, Cerne; Charles Critchell, Sidlen. The names are given as shewing the leading supporters at that date. Mr. Lloyd was minister in 1806-7, but we can gather no definite information about him beyond this fact. A Mr. Bishop seems to have been here about 1808, probably he was a supply only, and did not remain long. Hutchins says, "That about this time the meeting was frequented by perhaps 40 of the towns-people, and as many of the neighbourhood."

James Troubridge held the pastorate from 1812 to 1863. Born at Shaftesbury, his youth was spent at Salisbury. Having a fine

voice, he became a chorister in the Cathedral, but he occasionally attended the preaching in Scot's Lane, and this led to his decision for Christ. He was educated at Axminster Academy, and, whilst a student, supplied the pulpit at Cerne some months before settling there. He was ordained, October 18th, 1812. "Though the day was wet, the congregations were large and remarkably attentive."

Mr. Troubridge, in his jubilee address, thus depicts the state of things at Cerne in 1812. "Darkness covered the place, and gross darkness the people. Vice and immorality abounded on every hand. The Sabbath was universally profaned, being used for pleasure, business, and getting drunk. There had been only occasional services in the old chapel, and at the church there was no supply, at one time, for eight weeks. He had seen men and lads playing ball against the walls of the church on a Sunday. . . The tradesmen spent almost all their leisure time in the public houses: everything holy was scoffed at, and infidelity prevailed to a fearful extent." The young minister went earnestly to work, formed the first Sunday School in the town, which soon numbered 100, and remained the Superintendent up to the last; he held services at Minterne, Puddletrenthide, Middlemarsh, Upcerne, and other villages; the chapel was well attended, large additions were made to the church, and some striking cases of conversion were recorded. Among the adherents were several families of position and wealth. "For a small town, there was at that period, a flourishing Independent community." Mention may be made of James Petty, yeoman, Forston; Henry Petty, woolstapler, Evershot; John Petty, Frome St. Quinton; John and Jonathan Gray, yeomen, Knaps Hill; James Young, yeoman, Puddletrenthide, whose wife had received her religious impressions under the ministry of the Rev. J. Banister, of Wareham; these and others drove in for worship on the Sunday morning. The following names may also be added, though the list is far from complete: J. Frampton, Solicitor; T. Pitman, schoolmaster; Hodges, tanner; Levi Groves, fellmonger; James, Robert, and John Bennett, Thorne, Beer, Cave, Hodder, and most of the ordinary trades were represented in the congre-



gation, and several industries, that have passed away from the town.

Mr. and Mrs. Petty, of Forston, having no family, invited Mr. Troubridge to take up his abode with them, and he enjoyed their hospitality for ten years, till his marriage, and they were ever his most kind and helpful friends. He often referred to the bitter winter 1812-13, when the guests invited to Forston for the Christmas were snowed up, and could not return to their homes for six weeks. In 1820, the chapel was enlarged and renovated at a cost of £400, nearly all of which was raised by the people themselves. The opening services were held August 20th, and Messrs. Prankard (Sheerness), Small (Axminster), and Cracknell (Weymouth), preached on the occasion. "The congregations were large and attentive, and the prospects of future usefulness very encouraging." The chief contributor was the Hon. Mrs. Digby, Minterne House (widow of Admiral Digby), who gave £50, one half of which was to be regarded as on behalf of the "poor who have the will, but not the means." This lady, who was in full sympathy with evangelical truth, often joined in the public service at the chapel, and occasionally sat down at the Lord's Supper. She was a liberal supporter of the minister, and supplied him with ample funds for distribution among the poor; she was an annual subscriber to the London Missionary Society, the Irish Evangelical Society, the Axminster Academy, and in 1824 gave £5 to the County Association. Miss Carnegie, who resided with her as companion, also valued the ministry of Mr. Troubridge, and generously assisted various good works. The pastor, in 1821, married Miss Crocker, formerly of Kezworth Farm, Wareham, who was a true help meet for him, and their daughter, Mrs. Critchell, has kindly supplied much valuable information. The celebration of Mr. Troubridge's jubilee, September 9th, 1862, was a great event. A large number assembled from various parts, and after a sermon by the Rev. J. Rogers (Bridport), the Rev. John T. Smith (Sydling), on behalf of the people, presented a silver tea service to the aged pastor, as a tribute of affectionate regard, and testified to the high esteem in which he was held, not only by his

own people, but by a large circle of friends. At the evening meeting, Mr. Troubridge gave a most interesting review of his fifty years ministry, and referred with thankfulness to his obligations to the Petty and Bennett families, to the valuable assistance given by the Hon. Mrs. Digby, and to his kindly relations with the Vicar of the parish. Mr. Troubridge retired in the following March to Wotton-under-Edge, where he died 1881. His leading characteristic, so we learn from a member of his family, was fidelity to his convictions; what he deemed to be true he held tenaciously, and what he knew to be right he carried out, whatever the results might be. Mrs. Henry Petty, a daughter of Mr. Scott of Sherborne, was, for many years, the chief supporter of the chapel; she died at Weymouth about 1863.

After Mr. Troubridge's removal the Rev. John Thomas Smith (see Weymouth) was asked to take the oversight of the church, in connection with that of Sydling, where he resided, and, with the help of Mr. House, both places were supplied, and the village stations also. A new school-room was built near the chapel at Cerne, and opened November 26th, 1863, the chair being taken by W. Tice, Esq., of Soply Park, a firm friend to education. In May, 1864, Mr. Smith, finding that unworthy efforts were used to drive their children into the Episcopal Sunday School, and especially that a higher fee was charged to the children of Dissenters at the National School, revived the Day School, which was fairly successful. Under his guidance new chapels were built at Castle Hill and Grange. Mr. Smith was indefatigable in his labours, and rendered good service to Cerne for several years, but increasing infirmities compelled him to give up the work that had been very dear to him, and in 1870 he removed to Dorchester.

David Thomas became pastor in 1869. Born at Borth, among the Welsh Hills, near the source of the Severn, he was educated at Bala and Brecon. He took charge of the little church at West Lulworth in 1868, removing to Cerne the following year, and was ordained June, 1869. The chapel, though sufficiently capacious was sadly delapidated, and moreover was held on a life over 70 years of age, so the people resolved, if possible, to secure the

freehold, and erect a new building.

The first lease was granted in 1729, when the chapel was built, the lease was renewed in 1782, on the lives of Samuel Randall the younger, surgeon ; James Petty, yeoman, of Cattistock ; and Robert Porter, of Frome Vauchurch, yeoman. A further lease was granted in 1825, on the life of George Young, aged 10, son of James Young, of Puddletrenthide.

The freehold of the old site was secured from General Pitt-Rivers for £100, and when the schoolroom was burnt the amount (£67 12s. 6d.) paid by the Insurance Office was applied towards the purchase. A building committee was formed, consisting of Messrs. D. Thomas, H. Norman, J. Derriman, G. Cornick, A. and H. Jenner, J. Whitty, G. Chant and Miss Norman, and collectors appointed. The plans were prepared by Mr. Jackson, of Weymouth, and the contract for the work was taken by Messrs. Rendell & Co., of Dorchester ; the foundation stones were laid July 14th, 1888, by J. T. Stephens, Esq., J.P. (Bridport), and J. Lewis, Esq. (Bath), the Rev. Urijah Thomas (Bristol), giving an appropriate address. The opening took place, April 16th, 1889. A public meeting was held in the afternoon, the Revs. W. Gooby, O. Thomas, E. E. Cleal, R. Marks and J. Davis taking part. At the tea 250 sat down in the National Schoolroom, kindly lent by the Vicar ; in the evening an eloquent and impressive sermon was delivered by the Rev. J. Ossian Davies, of Bournemouth, from Mat. xxi., 10, "And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" It being found that only £7 was needed to discharge all liabilities, an appeal was made for this sum, to which there was a ready response, and the new buildings were declared free of debt. The singing of the doxology brought to a close this inspiring and memorable day. The chapel is neat and comfortable, and has a suitable schoolroom at the rear ; the unsightly cottages in front have been removed, and the space tastefully laid out in grass and shrubs ; and there is sufficient land for the erection of a manse. The total cost amounted to £788. The accomplishment of this great undertaking, is evidence of the liberality and unwearied efforts of both minister and people. But the

strain had told on the good pastor, and this, with a heavy domestic trial, and the discouragements incidental to work in a place declining in trade and population, undermined his health. Before he had quite recovered from an attack of influenza, he fulfilled a preaching engagement at Castle Hill, a branch church under his care, five miles away, over a wild bleak road, thus bringing on a relapse, which proved fatal, July 27th, 1892. Mr. Thomas, though not favoured with large popular gifts, was a man of wide reading and deep thought, gentle and patient amid much sorrow, prompt and faithful in the discharge of duty, hence he was esteemed, trusted, and loved by all who knew him.

George David Davis, trained at the Western College, settled as minister in 1893. The late Mr. Napoleon Bonnett had left a sum of money to be applied for the purchase of an organ and the erection of a platform for the choir, the cost amounting to £170. The new instrument was opened August 24th, 1893, and a recognition service was held the same day. The Rev. J. McClune Uffen (Dorchester) preached in the afternoon from Ps. xcvi., 9, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Mr. Bawler presided at the organ, and the musical part of the service was led by the Dorchester choir. The Rev. J. Ogle (Sherborne) presided at the evening meeting, which was largely attended. The ordination service was held June 18th, 1894, in which Dr. Chapman (Western College), and neighbouring ministers, took part. Mr. Davis removed in 1897 to East Budleigh, Devon. James Alfred Balshaw, educated at Lancashire College, and previously at Wirksworth, accepted a call in 1897, and entered on his labours with every prospect of comfort and success. A recognition service was held early in December, at which a hearty welcome was given to Mr. and Mrs. Balshaw. The Rev. J. Ogle (Sherborne) spoke of him as "one whom he had long known and loved, and whose lofty aims and high character had won his unalterable respect and admiration," and who "had come with holy purpose to do the will of God, and to win souls for the kingdom of Christ."

The present deacons are Henry Norman, Joseph Derryman



and George Cornick. The church at Cerne does not seem to have been affected by Arian doctrines, or to have been rent by any divisions: for the space of something like 200 years, it has set forth, and stood up for, "the truth as it is in Jesus," and numbers, through successive generations, have gone forth from it to witness and work for Christ elsewhere. D.

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## CHARMOUTH.

A stranger passing through this village can hardly fail to notice its beautiful situation, splendid roads, well-kept side walk, abundant and free water supply, and the substantial, comfortable houses that, embowered in fushias or roses, or covered with magnolia, line the one steep street. It looks, and is, an ideal place to which to retire from the struggle of great cities, and the strife of tongues—

"To husband out life's taper at the close,  
And keep the flame from wasting by repose."

The last thing to be suggested by anything one sees is that there are any historical associations connected with the place. The church is a modern structure; there are no ruins of castle or abbey; the houses are modern too. And yet the neighbourhood is rich in memories of bygone times. Here, where the Char has through ages cut an opening in the cliffs at the innermost part of the wide bay, known locally by the significant title of Deadman's Bay, the Danes, on more than one occasion, effected a landing, and after a great battle, made good their footing. In the Civil Wars it must have been a lively place, for marchings and counter marchings between Lyme Regis and Chidcock Castle—the hurrying of beaten men, and the shout of victory—were frequent occurrences. Charles II. came here after the battle of Worcester—"that crowning mercy"—in hope of getting a boat to carry him over to France, and spent a night in the old Queen's Arms Inn, long since converted into the minister's house and a cottage. The secret way in the chimney corner by which he was conveyed up to his chamber, is still shown in the cottage, and some loyal



subject has had the King's Arms carved in the wall of the bedroom in which he slept. Charles narrowly escaped falling into the hands of the Parliamentary troops here. Bartholomew Wesley, or Westley, the great-grandfather of the famous founder of Methodism, was the Puritan rector, and, villages being then pretty much what they are now, places where everybody knows everybody's business, Westley heard of the stranger, who had come to the inn on a weary horse, and, having his suspicions aroused, woke up the apparently unwilling magistrate to make investigations. But the man of law's delays gave Charles the chance of flight, which he was not slow to take. A troop of horse sent in pursuit took the wrong road, and so the fugitive escaped. This Bartholomew Westley held the living of Catherston as well as that of Charmouth. He was removed from the living of Charmouth after the Restoration, Hutchin's says, apparently without good authority, as "intruder." It is much more likely that his zeal against the King was remembered, and that means were found to pay him out by taking the rectory from him. He was ejected from Catherston for non-conformity in 1662. From such fragmentary notices of him as have come down to us we can recover some impression of his personality. He was a little man, like his celebrated great-grandson John, with strong convictions, which he expressed in language more vigorous than courteous. Calamy says that he had a rasping tongue that prevented him from being a popular preacher. He was an ardent politician of Republican sentiments, tempered by a disposition to rule. After his ejection he continued to live in Charmouth, where he practised medicine, until his death, which was hastened by grief at the loss of his son, the Rev. John Wesley, ejected from Whitchurch. He was buried in Lyme Regis churchyard, February 15th, 1670, leaving a widow, Margaret, who was buried December 20th, 1685.

At the same time that Mr. Wesley was practising medicine in Charmouth, the Rev. Henry Backaller, who had been ejected from Chidcock by the Act of Uniformity, took up his residence in the village, moving from place to place as he was able, preaching in private houses. In 1669 he was reported to the Bishop as preaching occasionally at Winsham, in the houses of Henry,

Henly, Esq., and John Bennett, to 200 hearers.\* On Charles' Indulgence, in 1672, he was described as "of Chard," and licensed as a "Presbyterian teacher in any allowed place." Six days later, May 8th, 1672, he was licensed to conduct services in the house of Sarah Kerridge, at Wootton Fitzpaine (widow, we suppose, of the Rev. John Kerridge, the Puritan rector, and mother of Mr. John Kerridge, M.A., ejected from the Grammar School at Lyme). How long he remained in the neighbourhood is not known. Calamy says that he had a somewhat unusual experience. He had at one time been curate of Woodland, Devon, and, in the troublous times after his ejection, he returned there, "where, as there was no settled minister and but little maintenance, he again preached by connivance," or, in other words, occupied his old pulpit in the parish church. He was a member of the Exeter Association of Nonconformist Ministers for many years,† and died in or about Exeter 1713, "wanting but a few months of 100 years old."

A third ejected minister who lived at Charmouth, and whose residence has left a more permanent record than that of either of the others already mentioned, was the Rev. John Brice. Born at Netherbury in 1636, and educated at the Grammar School there, he proceeded to Magdalene College, Oxford. On leaving the University he became curate to Mr. Thorne, of Weymouth, and was ordained by Dr. Ironside, Bishop of Bristol, at the same time as Mr. Backaller. In 1658 he was rector of Chickerell. And in 1659 he settled at Marshwood, but did not long continue there, being ejected in August, 1662, for nonconformity. Like the Rev. John Wesley, the son of his neighbour, he seems to have been unwilling to take the bolder path advocated by many of the ejected ministers, that of openly preaching in defiance of the law. But the net was not to be avoided so easily, and "he met with a great deal of trouble, and was twice in Dorchester jail for nonconformity," under either the Five Mile or the Conventicle Act. When not enjoying the hospitality (such as it was) of the Government in Dorchester, and the society of the saintly men imprisoned there for conscience sake, he lived on at Marshwood

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\* Cod. Ten.

† Isaac Gilling's MS. Minutes.

for some years. One of the earliest licenses taken out under the Indulgence of 1672 was taken out by him on April 30th, to hold Presbyterian services in his own house in "Marshod," and, in June following, to hold services in the house of Eleanor Floyer, at Whitchurch. "In his latter years," says Calamy, "he married one Mrs. Floyer, a gentlewoman of a good family, who had a considerable estate, by which means he lived and died in plenty." Is this the Mrs. Floyer in whose house he conducted services? If so, we can imagine the romantic interest that eventually attached to the coming of the good man, who had tramped through the marshy bottoms to meet the little grave-faced company, who listened with gladness, not unmingled with fear, to his earnest words; an interest not diminished by the memory of his bonds and imprisonment for the Gospel's sake. It may be added that "the family of the Floyer's had a kind of aisle, or rather square tower, adjoining the south-side of Whitchurch Canonicorum Church, which was used as their burying-place. It was pulled down some years ago, and three large flat stones are laid upon the spot with the name of Floyer upon them."\* In 1682, Roberts says that "William Ellesdon, Esq., of Charmouth, stands charged with discouraging informations against Nonconformists, giving one-third of a fine received upon the conviction of the Rev. J. Brice, the Nonconformist minister of Charmouth, to that very individual."† On the passing of the Toleration Act, 1688, Mr. Brice opened a place of worship at Charmouth, of which he was the first pastor. The meeting-house was formed out of two mud cottages which adjoined his house—the old Queen's Arms referred to above—bought by Mrs. Eleanor Floyer 1673. It gives some idea of the times to know that a communication was made from Mr. Brice's house into the Meeting by means of folding-doors, and that "in this doorway stood the man of God when addressing his people," ready at any sign of disturbance by the constables or others to make good his escape.‡ Here he continued until his death, March 15th, 1716. At or before his death he conveyed the chapel, house and garden to trustees, and gave £300, which

\* Hutchings' Dorset ii., 267.

† Roberts' "Monmouth" ii., 286.

‡ Evan. Mag. 1815. p. 466.

seems to have been invested in the purchase of Lamberton's Plot of two acres of land in Lyme Regis, and the Ley's Estate of twenty acres in Symondsbury. The chapel has besides the above a field in Lower Sea Lane, about one acre. How this came is not known to the writer. Possibly it was part of Mr. Brice's benefaction. Under an Enclosure Act a plot of land in the Axminster Road—one acre—was allotted to the trustees. The rents of these lands, &c., have formed the chief sources of the minister's income—never a living—down to the present time.

The first of Mr. Brice's successors whose name has come down to us was the Rev. Robert Batten, sometime colleague of the Rev. Wm. Youatt, at Colyton and Sidmouth, and who died at Ilminster in 1773, being of a very great age. He was succeeded about 1740 by the Rev. Thomas Henderson, who seems to have won the respect and confidence of the churches all around, and, when the Gospel was not preached in other churches, the members betook themselves to Mr. Henderson's ministry.<sup>†</sup> He resigned about 1774, and died at Charmouth about 1778. During the greater part of his pastorate the rector of the parish was the Rev. W. Combe, B.A., who was "steward of all the estates of the late Mr. Gray . . . assessor and collector for the parish of the land tax, house tax and highways, register and entry clerk and keeper of all the parish rates, papers, &c. . . a commissioner of turnpikes and frequently overseer."\*

The Rev. Benjamin Seaward came next, in 1775, but did not stay long, removing to Barnstaple in 1777, where he died at the age of 50, after a ministry there of 21 years. For a year or two the pulpit was supplied, probably by students from Mr. Rooker's Academy, Bridport, and in 1780, one of them, the Rev. Isaac Tozer, a member of an old Devonshire nonconformist family, accepted the pastorate. He found the Church very much disorganized and his first work was its reconstruction and the provision of proper records, which have, however, unhappily, disappeared. He had an even more remarkable neighbour than Mr. Henderson, in the Rev. John Audain, described as an auctioneer, paid preacher to Episcopalians, Methodists, Catholics, &c., a privateer, who, on one

\* Hutchings Dorset, ii., 226.

† See page 51.

occasion, in the West Indies, left the pulpit to go to sea in his privateer in chase of an enemy's vessel, which he carried by boarding before a frigate that was in chase came up.\* While here Mr. Tozer preached the funeral sermon of his old schoolmaster, the Rev. Sam. Buncombe, of Ottery, of which some idea may be formed from the divisions. Text, 2 Kings ii., 11 and 12. I. What these holy men were doing. II. What they said. III. What they saw. IV. What they felt. He was a humble, diligent, affectionate pastor and minister; a truly spiritual and evangelical preacher, and widely known in later life as "the *good* Mr. Tozer." For nearly sixteen years he remained among the humble fisher folk that then formed the population of the village. During that time he married Mrs. Ann Dare, a widow. In 1795, he received invitations from three important Churches—Plymouth, Exeter and Taunton. He decided to accept the latter, and succeeded the venerable Rev. Thomas Reader, as minister of Paul's Meeting, where he had a most successful pastorate of 25 years, exercising a wide and increasing influence until his death, Oct. 12th, 1820.

Four years afterwards, in 1799, the Rev. John Crook settled and was ordained here. A headstone on the west side of the graveyard tells us all that is known about him. "For 13 years he discharged the ministerial duties of this place, and died at Lyme Regis much respected, February 4th, 1830, aged 63 years."

In 1812, the Rev. Benjamin Jeanes, educated at Hoxton Academy, came from Peterborough, and with him better times for this little church, which had maintained a struggling existence for over 120 years in the old mud chapel. It had never wanted a man to fill its pulpit, and even in the worst times of the Arian troubles, its ministers had been true to the evangelical faith of its founder. But the congregations had always been small and poor. The church had existed, but hardly lived. During the 26 years of Mr. Jeanes' ministry it reached a higher level of activity, of zeal, of generosity, and of influence, than it had ever reached before, or has touched since. In 1825, the old mud chapel was taken down and a more substantial and commodious chapel

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\* Roberts' History of Lyme.



built, and opened August 30th. Five years later, Mr. Jeanes and his people were engaged in the settlement of the Rev. James Hargreaves at Morecombelake, and the erection of the chapel there, and later of the chapels at Marshalsay and Fishpond. In this year the church subscribed £170 towards Home Missions—including the value of 10 Peruvian Bonds given by Mrs. R. Kennaway—and £20 to Foreign Missions. The minister's house was also enlarged by the erection of two good rooms on the west side, almost, if not wholly at the minister's expense, to provide accommodation for his pupils. And the membership of the church greatly increased. This improved condition of things was due to several causes. Mr. Jeanes himself was a man of education, earnest, diligent and devout; but without any special gifts, if we can trust the memory of one who spent the greater part of two years under his roof, as his pupil. For, to eke out the income of his tiny charge, the pastor kept—and successfully kept—a boarding school for the sons of gentlemen. To this school Henry Alford (afterwards Dean of Canterbury), son of a clergyman resident at Curry Rivel, was sent in 1820. Writing in 1866,\* he describes Mr. Jeanes. "The characteristics of our old friend, and of the brethren who came to officiate for him, were rather an avoidance than an inculcation of anything like high doctrine. There was an abundant flow of florid, rhetoric, garnished with frequent quotations from Dryden and Goldsmith; not a word of conversion, nor an approach to the normal state of religious thought, which George Eliot (in "Felix Holt") seems to imagine natural among Independents . . . . Our good friend was a staunch supporter of the injured princess (Queen Caroline) and employed all hands in the school in decorating for the illumination on her acquittal. Peace to his memory." Without quite accepting, in its fulness, this somewhat contemptuous description, based on childish impressions made more than forty years before, we may assume that Mr. Jeanes' character rather than his gifts made for success. No doubt he reaped the fruit of the seed sown by his predecessors. And to a great extent circumstances were more favourable in his time than they

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\* "Contemporary Review."

have usually been. Several persons of means and influence were active members, among whom were Mrs. Robert Kennaway, foremost and most liberal in every good work ; and Mr. William Burnard, a sail-cloth and twine manufacturer, described as “for thirty years deacon and father of the church”—a man who did all that in him lay to make the church successful and the minister happy. He lies buried in the place he loved and served so well, and a brass let into the floor of one of the pews on the west side of the chapel indicates the spot. There were others of the same sort—the Channons and Mr. Creed, of whom a tablet on the east wall still reminds us. Mr. Jeanes died August 18th, 1838, aged 55, and was buried beneath the pulpit.

The Rev. R. Gill, of Castle Cary, and previously of Paignton, commenced his ministry here July, 1839. In a letter to him, part of which is still preserved,\* the place was described by a friend, who said : “There is a house adjoining the chapel with a good garden, the air salubrious, the village lovely, seven or eight coaches pass daily.” The house appears to have been in a very bad state, and £120 was spent to make it comfortable for Mr. Gill. This money was advanced by Mr. Burnard. An unexpected legacy of £100, from Miss Lydia Channon, coming to the church, what remained of it after legal and other expenses had been paid, was generously accepted by Mr. Burnard in full discharge of all obligations to him. “The continued sickness of Mr. Gill’s family rendered it impossible for them to live by the sea, in consequence of which he intimated that he should be obliged to remove. He introduced Mr. John Foster Newton—a student of the Western College—as a fit person to be his successor.”† The people falling in with his suggestion, Mr. Gill resigned April 4th, 1845, and Mr. Newton accepted the pastorate on the 19th, and was ordained September 18th following. His first care was to start a Sunday and Day School. Towards the end of the summer of 1848, his health declined, and, being unable to preach, he arranged with the Rev. F. Smith, late of Sidmouth, and who had previously been settled for a short time at Broadwindsor, to take his place for nine Sundays. On

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\* Minute Book.

† Minutes.

Christmas Day, 1848, Mr. Newton resigned the charge, and died March 18th, 1849, and was succeeded by Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith rendered such good service for many years in obscure parts of the country, and had such an unusual history, that his story may interest many. He was the son of Colonel Smith, of Fairwater House, Taunton,\* where he was born October 23rd, 1800. Educated at the Military College, Sandhurst, he passed into the East India Service, and whilst serving with his regiment passed from darkness to light. Doubting the lawfulness of his profession, he resigned his commission and returned, after nine years' absence, to England. Strong influence was used to induce him to become a clergyman of the Church of England, but as he could not do so with a clear conscience, he decided, much to the annoyance of his friends and to the injury of his temporal prospects, on entering the Independent ministry. After a course of study under the Rev. Walter Scott, at Rothwell, he settled at Waytown and Broadwindsor, about 1833.† The decline in the cause at Charmouth that had commenced in Mr. Jeanes' last years, and had continued in the days of his successors, made further progress in Mr. Smith's. He resigned September 29th, 1859, and removed to the scene of his former labours at Broadwindsor in 1861, where he gave unstinted and unpaid assistance until his last illness. He died February 20th, 1873. "Eminently devout, dignified in bearing, generous even beyond his means, singularly pure and holy in life, he everywhere won respect and honoured his beloved Lord. 'He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost.'" He was the type of a great multitude of village ministers, of whom the world hears little, but "whose names are written in heaven."

He was succeeded by the Rev. George Cooke, whose ministry commenced January, 1860, and terminated with the year 1862. The most important event in Mr. Cooke's ministry appears to have been his getting the Rev. John Nash to supply his pulpit for three months. This led to Mr. Nash's being invited to become the minister of the place, which he did January, 1863. It was the most disastrous period in the history of the church. Scandal arose, which, though investigated and declared to be unfounded, refused to die. Driven by the instinct of self-preservation, in

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\* Now part of the Independent College. † Memoir Cong. Year Book, 1874.

consequence of the low state to which the church and congregation had sunk, a large majority of the people requested him to resign his charge, which he did at the end of March, 1865, and disappeared from the Congregational ministry.

In the depressed condition of the church the members looked for advice and help to the Rev. J. Rogers, of Bridport, and the County Association. They were advised to unite with Lyme Regis, and have one pastor for the two places; and the Rev. William Axford, a worthy minister whose health had compelled him to relinquish the pastorate of Clayton West, Yorks, after seven years successful work, was recommended to them, and settled as pastor of both churches. He set to work vigorously; re-opened the Sunday School, which had been closed; introduced an harmonium into the service; the chapel was re-floored and re-seated, and otherwise greatly improved, at a cost of £130, almost the whole of which Mr. Axford collected from friends far and near, travelling hundreds of miles, at his own expense, in order to do so. The chapel was re-opened June 5th, 1866. But the old troubles re-appeared, and at the request of the Home Missionary Society and the County Association the experiment of grouping was abandoned, and Mr. Axford left to become minister of Lyme in the September of that year. The church, as a spiritual body, seems to have by this time disappeared, for the "Rev. Thos. Just, of Newport, Fifeshire, at the request of the Rev. J. Rogers and the trustees, and of the friends connected with the cause, accepted the pastorate,\*" and commenced his work, Nov. 11th, 1866. Failing health had in his case, as in that of several others, caused him to accept the charge; but the change not proving so beneficial as he had hoped, he removed to Lyme in 1868. He did one good thing. He was the means of bringing a church membership together once more. The church now proceeded to invite the Rev. E. H. Perkins, lately of Milborne Port, to become their minister, which he did in November, 1868, and removed to Axminster in 1873. With his ministry the entries in the minute-book of the church come to an end.

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\* Minutes.

His successor was the Rev. Francis Clarke, who had previously held pastorates at New Mills, Derbyshire, and at Castle Street, Dundee. He brought new vigour and enthusiasm into the work of the church. The services were made brighter and more attractive. The chapel was once more improved, and the manse put into good repair. The Sunday school and the congregations increased in numbers and intelligence. Mr. Clarke took great interest in and was exceedingly helpful to the struggling village churches in West Dorset, taking a responsible part in the erection of the chapel at Hawkchurch, and was an active member of the committee, and in 1880 chairman of the County Association. He also interested himself in all that concerned the welfare of the village and the temporal prosperity of its inhabitants. After ten years useful and happy work he retired, in 1885, to London, the better to superintend the education of his only son.

The present minister, the Rev. H. Gibbons, settled here in 1885. He had previously acted as evangelist at Hawkchurch, whither he came from the Nottingham Institute, and for a time he served both churches, but, eventually, finding it impossible to do the work of both places efficiently, he resigned his connection with Hawkchurch. Mr. Gibbons has taken great interest in all village business and has held the office of chairman of the School Board, of the Parish Council, and lecturer on electricity, &c., to the County Council.

O.

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### CHICKERELL, WEST.

This is a fishing village about two and a half miles north-west of Weymouth, and near the Fleet Water, inside the remarkable pebble ridge. In the time of the Commonwealth, John Brice was rector here—a devout, earnest man, who was ejected in 1662 from Marshwood, and, after the Revolution, founded and endowed the Congregational Church at Charmouth. In the adjoining parish of Wyke Regis, about the same time, there was the faithful Gospel ministry of Edward Buckler, ejected from Calbourn, in Hants, and afterwards of Edward Dammer (see Dorchester), another sufferer for conscience sake; and within



walking distance, the excellent and eminent George Thorne at Weymouth, held forth the word of life. Among the licences issued we find the following: "401. A house in the possession of Captain James Wood, Chickerill, denomination not stated, 15th Oct. 1816." This was the first Nonconformist place of worship of which we have any evidence; but we know not by what body of Christians the services were conducted, or how long they were continued. In the year 1832, writes the Rev. W. Lewis, who has kindly supplied the following facts, Ann and Elizabeth Tulledge, of Chickerell, were received as members of Hope Chapel, Weymouth. At this date the Gospel was preached at Chickerell by friends from Weymouth in a room hired for the purpose. At what time the preaching commenced does not appear, but when the "Itinerant Society" was formed, in 1846, this was one of the places supplied. Very soon the congregation increased, and a large room was rented of Mr. Rose, a great friend of the cause. In 1848, a new floor was laid and other improvements made; at length, after the Wesleyans had opened a room in the village for preaching, it became known as the Congregational Chapel. There, for upwards of forty years, the Gospel was set forth with much success, and often to crowded audiences. Many were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and some joined the churches at Weymouth, worshipping there on the Sunday morning, and returning to their own chapel for the afternoon and evening services. After a time a Sunday morning prayer and fellowship meeting was established, and when the Lord's Supper was observed it was presided over by a pastor or deacon from Weymouth. In consequence of the age and infirmity of the rector, most of the Christian work in the village was carried on by the members of this church, who visited the sick, distributed tracts, and read the Bible in the homes of the people. Mention may be made of George Stroud, a retired coast guard, who was very useful in this way, spending many hours each week in visitation and missionary work. After a time difficulties arose. A new Wesleyan Chapel was built close to the Congregational; the Plymouth Brethren, with their plausible teaching, drew away some of the members, and others had passed away to join the church

above; the congregation fell off, the building had become leaky, and for several months was closed. Some advised that the work should be abandoned; there were, however, a few in the village and at Weymouth, old associates of the cause, who believed that God had a place for that church to fill, and a witness for Him to to bear; the chapel was re-opened in faith and hope, and soon brighter days came. J. Cromy-Buck, Esq., a member of the Gloucester street Church at Weymouth, most generously offered to build a chapel for the people. A freehold site was purchased in the centre of the village, plans were prepared by Mr. R. C. Bennett, of Weymouth, and the foundation stone was laid June 6th, 1883, by H. R. Knight (Cromey-Buck), Esq., nephew of the donor. The building was opened Sept. 19th, Dr. Kennedy, of London, preached in the afternoon from Matthew viii., 31, and a public meeting was held in the evening, presided over by J. Cromey-Buck, Esq., who, in the course of his speech, said that as God had graciously blessed him, he gladly devoted a portion of his substance to the erection of the building in which they were gathered, and which had that day been consecrated to the service of God, and it gave him great pleasure now to hand over the deeds of the chapel and freehold, to the Rev. J. Wood on behalf of the trustees. Messrs. W. Taylor and J. Newman, representing the church, spoke of their deep obligation and hearty thankfulness to the chairman for his splendid gift to them; it had fulfilled their prayer, inspired them with hope, and given them fresh courage for the work that lay before them. Sir R. N. Howard, mayor of Weymouth, expressed the pleasure it had given him to prepare the deeds by which this beautiful and commodious chapel was placed in trust as a fee gift to the Congregationalists of Chickerell for ever, and his hope that great prosperity might be connected therewith. The meeting was also addressed by Dr. Kennedy, and the Revs. W. Smith, J. Wood, W. Lewis, of Weymouth, and J. S. Butcher, of Upway. Large success followed the occupancy of the new building, and under the leadership of Mr. John Newman the Sunday school increased to 120. The need of a school-room being deeply felt, and there being sufficient space on their own freehold, the friends resolved to arise and

build. Mr. W. Taylor, who had been an active member of the church for many years, drew the plans and superintended the work. The building, well-suited to the requirements, was opened Sept. 19th, 1886. The cost (£165) was soon defrayed, and these buildings stand, an ornament to the village, the centre of holy, gracious influences, and a monument to the piety and liberality of a noble Christian man, who by them, "being dead, yet speaketh."

D.

### COMPTON.

As the traveller journeys along the road, from Sherborne towards Yeovil, he finds, very shortly after passing the second milestone, a fairly steep hill in front of him, and catches sight of the first house he has seen by the road-side since leaving Sherborne, and, with one exception, the only house, so situated, that he will see before he reaches the old toll-house, at the entrance to Yeovil. Ascending this hill, and just before he reaches the cottage, he will see a building, partly concealed by tall pine trees, on the high ground to his right. If he climbs the rugged path leading to this building he will find it has heavy mullioned windows, which are usually concealed by shutters, and is surrounded by a little graveyard, bounded by ivy-clad walls. Should he enquire, he will find that this is the Half-Way-House Chapel, Compton. It is the Story of the Church of Christ, of which this is the home, that we have to tell. As all documents older than the present century have been lost, the information has had to be sought in many directions, and put together like the parts of a Chinese puzzle.

Although the twin villages of Over and Nether Compton are neither of them more than a mile from the Great-Western road, from London to Exeter, they are so snugly tucked away in the rolls of the beautiful country, that no sound or sight of its traffic ever reaches or disturbs its inhabitants, and it would be hard to find a people who seem to live a life more aloof from the life of the great world outside than they do. It may not have been always so. Great changes have occurred, even here, since the

time of the Commonwealth. 250 years ago, when our story of this Church begins. Then the land was almost all unenclosed, and was the property of a number of sturdy yeomen or freeholders, who lived by the cultivation of their own estates. Now, a process of land enclosure, which began in the first half of the eighteenth century, is complete, and an economic process, begun about the same time, has banished the yeomen, and made the land the property of one family. Then the little manufacturer and handicraftsman, everywhere in evidence in the West of England, formed quite half the population, whereas now the inhabitants have but one industry—agriculture. These and other changes have not been without their effect on the history of the Congregational Church here.

Readers of English history may remember that on March, 20th, 1654, an order in council was issued by the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, the preamble of which sets forth, "that, whereas for some time past, there had not been any certain course established for supplying vacant places (that is parish churches, &c.) with able and fit persons to preach the gospel . . . it is ordained . . . that every person who shall, after 25th March, 1654, be presented . . . to any benefice . . . shall, before he be admitted, be examined and approved by the persons (38 in all, 30 ministers and 8 laymen) hereinafter named, to be a person, for the grace of God in him, his holy and unblamable conversation, as also for his knowledge and utterance, able and fit to preach the gospel." \* These were the famous TRIERS. They were of different religious persuasions, and had no commission to examine those who came before them, as to what denomination they belonged to. Fitness was what they had to enquire into. Few men have been more abused than these men for the way in which they executed their difficult office. Men who failed to satisfy them were furious, and wrote abusive pamphlets, which are quoted by controversialists to this day. Among these was a Mr. Anthony Sadler, who, on being presented to the rectory of Compton Harvey or Over Compton, appeared before the Triers, and was ultimately rejected

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\* Perry's Hist. of the Eng. Church, 478.

by them. Whereupon he wrote a pamphlet, entitled "*Inquisitio Anglicana*," wherein he endeavours to expose the commissioners to contempt.\* He was specially indignant that they attempted to enquire about the work of grace in him. He was answered by Mr. John Nye, the clerk to the commissioners, "Shewing the gross mistakes and most notorious falsehoods in his dealings with the commissioners. To which Mr. Sadler never replied."† The Triers, like other people who have difficult and delicate duties to discharge, no doubt made mistakes. "Yet," says Baxter, "to give them their due, they did abundance of good to the church. They saved many a congregation from ignorant, ungodly, drunken teachers—that sort of men who intend no more in the ministry than to say a sermon, as readers say their common prayers on a Sunday, and all the rest of the week go with the people to the alehouse, and harden them in sin."‡

To the living thus refused to Mr. Sadler, Mr. Robert Bartlett, a young man, a native of Frampton, near Dorchester, where he had a good grammar school education, was appointed in 1654. He was one of "the faithful ministers whom the Triers let in, for whom many thousands of souls blessed God."§ He had been for the two preceding years a lecturer, or as we should now say, a preacher, in Salisbury. Here, at Compton, he was ordained by the Rev. Henry Butler, of Yeovil, and others. And here he remained as rector, preaching in the parish church, and discharging the office of a faithful pastor until August 1662, and might have continued to the end of his days if he had been prepared to accept all and everything contained in and prescribed by the book called the Book of Common Prayer. But as he was too good a man to say that he believed what he did not believe, he was ejected. On his ejection he removed to Bradford Abbas, where he had a small estate, and preached in a private house. When the Five Mile Act was passed, in 1665, he was obliged to go further off, and removed to North Cadbury, where he lived with his family over twenty years, privately exercising his ministry among some of his own people who adhered to him, notwithstanding the fact

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\* Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy*, i., 175. † Neal's *Puritans*, ii., 628.

‡ Neal ii., 628.

§ Baxter's *Life*, p. 72.



that some of them were cast into Ilchester Jail, and were in danger of being ruined by being prosecuted at the assizes for £20 a month. Calamy describes him as a judicious, learned man, of the Congregational persuasion, but very moderate, and of a very healing spirit. He was humble in his deportment; a plain, affectionate, popular preacher; very laborious and constant in his ministerial service, and took great pains to speak to the capacities of his hearers. His behaviour was so inoffensive and exemplary that many profane people have declared that if but one man in the county went to heaven, they believed in their consciences it would be Mr. Bartlett. He did not confine his ministry to North Cadbury, but held services in private houses at both Compton and Yeovil. In 1669 spies reported that he preached to a congregation of seventy or eighty in the house of Henry Beaton at Over Compton.

On Charles II.'s Indulgence the following petition, which the writer has copied from the original in the State Paper Office, was forwarded:

To the King's most excellent Majestye.

The humble petition of the persons whose names are subscribed on the behalf of themselves & the rest of their Congregation,

Sheweth

That your Msty's humble petitioners doe with all thankfullness and humilitie acknowledge and accept of your Msty's grace and favour mentioned and expressed in your late declaration for the Libertye of tender consciences.

And in pursuance thereof doe humbly desire a license for Mr. Robert Bartlett our Pastor of the Congregationall persuasion to exercise his ministeriall Function at the house of James Hanne situate in Over Compton in the Countye of Dorset—The said Hanne, one of the petitioners subscribing and consenting thereunto—or elsewhere if he can get leave and opportunity. And your petitioners shall pray for your Msty's Long and Prosperous Raigne.

(Signed) JAMES HANNE  
MATTHEW DOWDALE  
WM. MARKS  
ROBERT ARNOLD

ROBERT  
BARTLETT

Over Compton Dorsett 6 May, '72.

The license for the place and the minister was issued as requested, and on Nov. 18th following the house of William

Bartlett, of Over Compton, was also licensed for worship. The Indulgence was recalled the next year, and was followed by a fresh outbreak of persecution. About this time, says Calamy, some who were in the commission of the peace, resolved to put a stop to his preaching. A Somersetshire justice signed a warrant against him, and sent it to the constable at North Cadbury. But suspecting the constable of being friendly to Mr. Bartlett, he ordered his servant to accompany him, and see the warrant executed. Mr. Bartlett promising to appear at the quarter sessions, the constable took his word, and he appeared accordingly. As soon as he came into court he was charged by some of the justices as a preacher of sedition, &c., to which he replied that he "preached only the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which teacheth men to lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty, under those who are in authority." They then asked him by what authority he did pretend to preach? His answer was, "I am ordained to the ministry, and woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." At length one asked him, "By whom were you ordained, by a bishop?" He answered, "There was no bishop at that time, but I was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The justice then asked him whether he owned the King's supremacy, and whether he had taken the oath of allegiance? On his answering in the affirmative, he asked him whether he would take the oath of allegiance again? On his assenting the justice ordered the oaths to be given to him, and he took them there in the court, and was civilly dismissed, to the no small disappointment of some present. A Dorsetshire justice, who lived near Compton, was so enraged that he immediately issued out his warrant to seize him there. The menaces and vigilance of his enemies made him decline coming to Compton on the Lord's Day, but he came sometimes on week days and preached there. Going once from thence to Yeovil, he met the justice who had issued the warrant, and had often openly declared that he would commit him; who, to the amazement of the servants who attended him, spoke to Mr. Bartlett with great respect and civility, and went on his way without giving him any angry

word. Mr. Bartlett took an interest in other churches also. When the Rev. Bartholomew Ashwood, minister of the church at Axminster, died, in 1678, Mr. Bartlett preached his funeral sermon, and recommended the Rev. Stephen Towgood, his successor, to them, and gave the charge at his ordination, in June 1679.\* Whether Mr. Bartlett or any of his people took any, and if so what, part in Monmouth's rebellion in 1685, which ended so disastrously at Sedgemoor, and was so savagely punished, is not known. Probably Mr. Bartlett held aloof, but it is hardly likely that all his friends did the same. Henry Pitman, the young surgeon, whose adventures have been worked up into the story, "For Faith and Freedom," by Sir Walter Besant, came from the neighbouring village of Sandford Oveas.† And twelve men were executed at Sherborne, eight at Yeovil, twelve at Ilchester, and three at Castle Carey, for complicity in that business, so that it is hard to believe that none of his friends were implicated. How the good man's heart must have bled for the sufferers, and their destitute widows and orphans!

On the passing of the Toleration Act, in 1688, he left North Cadbury, and lived at Nether Compton for twelve years. Then the congregation at Yeovil calling him to be their pastor also, he removed thither, but divided his labours on the Lord's Day between the two places until his death. "It was his constant method to begin the service with a short speech, the design of which was to excite an awful fear of God in the minds of his people. He usually took occasion from some providential occurrences, such as the death of any of the people, anything remarkable respecting the season, &c., &c."‡

He brought up two of his sons to the ministry. His son Samuel settled at Tiverton, Devon, where he had a large congregation, and his great labours among them were thought to hasten his end, for he died some years before his father, who lived to see the rest of his children well provided for. He died, after a short illness, on June 7th, 1710, and was buried between the doors of the Vicarage Street Chapel, Yeovil.

The next minister was the Rev. Henry Webber, who had been

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\* Axminster Ecclesiastica.

† An English Garner.

‡ Calamy.

educated at the Academy at Bridgwater, under the Rev. John Moore, who had been vicar of Long Burton, but who through conversation with Mr. Crane, of Beaminster, and other ejected ministers, found it impossible to retain his position in the Established Church, and had left in 1667.\* Mr. Webber came to Compton about 1712, and left or died about 1735 or 1736.

In 1737, the Rev. Matthew Dowdell, a student from Mr. Moore's Academy, at Tiverton, and possibly a grandson of the Matthew Dowdale who signed the petition given above in 1672, became the minister. He was ordained at Bridport at the same time as Josiah Bradshaw, of Beaminster, Joseph Keech, of Waytown, and Joseph Paull, of Blackdown; when the Rev. John Milner, D.D., preached a sermon on "The principles of religious liberty asserted," and the Rev. W. Prior, of Sherborne, gave the charge. He was almost certainly an Arian, and removed to Tetbury, Gloucestershire, as far as can be ascertained, about 1745.†

He was succeeded by one of Dr. Doddridge's pupils, the Rev. Thomas Webb, who removed the next year. It is doubtful whether he went to Broadway, Somerset, or to be assistant to Mr. Benson, at Wimborne.

The next minister of whom we have any notice was an old man, the Rev. John Copplestone, who came from Swanage in 1752, and left soon after, apparently because he found the infirmities of age creeping upon him, for he never took a charge afterwards, and died at a very advanced age somewhere near London. It may be, however, that an event which had happened a little while before his settlement had some effect on him, for in 1748 the Rev. George Lewis Young, then minister of Milbourne Port, licensed a house on his estate in Nether Compton, as a place of worship for Independents, and in 1751 he retired and lived here. He kept up this separate service until his death, many years afterwards. Josiah Thompson, writing about 1775, says, "he preaches to a few people in his own dwelling-house, but has no pastoral charge. He is now pretty far advanced in years, and having taken it into his head that none of the dissenting churches are

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\* Dorset Records.

† Walter Wilson MSS.

right, either in point of doctrine or discipline, he preaches to any he can get to hear him in his house." Probably Mr. Lewis was not so far wrong as Thompson seems to insinuate, for Arianism had entered most of the Nonconformist pulpits, and was emptying the chapels. But for all that, in a little place like Compton, it must have been a trial to have two places of worship at the same time.

There was also another and more serious trouble. The chapel was built on land held on lease for lives, and "when the lease of the place expired the landlord pulled it down from aversion to Dissenters."† So that the church was without a home. "The congregation being destitute agreed to build a meeting-house in a field called Upping Stock field, near the Half way House, a public-house on the road from Sherborne to Yeovil." This is the present chapel, which bears evidence by its size, its style, and substantiality, of the size of the congregation, their means and their taste. The building was originally thatched. Several considerations determined the choice of this site. For one thing they had to go where they could obtain land. But this site was especially convenient for people attending the chapel from Bradford Abbas and also from Yeovil. In the latter place the ministers of the old Meeting had become Arian, and such of the people as were of evangelical sentiments walked over to Compton to service, and joined the friends there in building the new chapel.

In 1753 the Rev. Peter Gifford, who had been minister of Dulverton for the previous fifteen years, became the first minister of the New Meeting, as the chapel was called. Mr. Gifford is reported to have been "a respectable minister and highly esteemed by those who knew him. He lived in the house next to the church. Next door to him lived a Quaker speaker (? Mr. Thompson, who kept a considerable and well-known boarding school), opposite lived the Rev. G. L. Young, and next door to him lived the minister of the parish." A daughter of Mr. Gifford married Mr. Brett, whose daughter married the late excellent Mr. Wm. Cayne, of Yeovil,\* one of whose descendants, the Rev. Evans Meech, is now a missionary in China. Mr. Gifford apparently

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\* Thompson MSS.



resided here until his death in 1792,<sup>†</sup> but resigned his charge through age in 1789.

After Mr. Gifford's retirement the services were supplied by several ministers, among whom were Mr. Whitefoot, Mr. Mills, Mr. Herdsman, Mr. Cox, Mr. Hyett, Mr. Pittard, and Dr. Duncan.

"At length the Rev. William Vaughan, a young minister from Pill, near Bristol, came, and, during his short and useful career, gave earnest of what he might have done had his life been spared. During the seven or eight months he was here there was a revival of religion. He went out into the surrounding parishes, preaching at the Baptist Meeting-house in Yeovil once or twice a week, and occasionally at Bradford and Thornford in private houses. His last sermon was on Heb. iv. 9."<sup>\*</sup> He died Nov. 30, 1791, and was buried in the chapel yard, the Rev. Isaac Tozer, of Charmouth, preaching his funeral sermon. A memorial inscription on the wall of the chapel still preserves his memory, but being only painted on the plaster is not likely to endure for a very long time. During Mr. Vaughan's illness the pulpit was supplied by Mr. Mills.

"After Mr. Vaughan's death the place was supplied for two or three years by a Mr. Aitken,"<sup>†\*</sup> of whom the writer can learn nothing.

"After him for some months the pulpit was supplied by Mr. E. D. Jackson, who, in the spring of 1793, settled at Warminster."<sup>†</sup>

About 1795, the Rev James Vickary, of the Axminster Academy, was invited to preach, and after considerable trial of his labours he was ordained pastor May 17, 1798, when Mr. Jackson preached the sermon. The time was one of transition in the affairs of this church. As pointed out above the congregation consisted to a considerable extent of people who came from Yeovil. With their pecuniary and other help the congregation might hope to be able to maintain a minister. But just before Mr. Vicary appeared upon the scene the Yeovil section of the congregation had become weary of the long journey to worship and conscious of

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\* Walter Wilson MSS.

† Fund Board Minutes.

the claims which the residents in their own town had upon them. About 1792 a church was formed in Yeovil, of which the Rev. J. W. Morren became the pastor March 29, 1795. A chapel was built and opened in 1803. This change, which affected their circumstances so seriously, made the people at Compton hesitate before asking Mr. Vickary to accept the permanent pastorate. He did, however, accept, and here he remained, among the comparatively poor people who were left for thirty-three years.

Changes over which Mr. Vickary had no control caused the congregation to grow continually smaller and poorer. The chapel, admirably situated for the convenience of the people when they came from Yeovil, Bradford Abbas, and Thornford, as well as the Comptons, was rather out of the way for the Compton people, and the erection of Methodist chapels in the latter villages left him dependent on the Comptons alone for a congregation. About 1810 one half of the population were dissenters,\* and one third or more of the people were employed in the dowlas manufacture carried on by Mr. Thompson, the member of the Society of Friends above referred to. A sprinkling of yeomen, too, still remained, most of whom were connected with the chapel and able to help to support the ministry. In 1816 the trustees were Thomas Russell, yeoman; Samuel Russell, yeoman; George Mayo, senior, gentleman, all of Nether Compton; Samuel Whitty and Benjamin Vowell, of Sherborne; William Ffooks and Matthew Ffooks, yeomen, Bradford Abbas; Thomas and William Ryall, yeomen, Thornford; William Bown, yeoman, Adber; George Mayo, jun., John Ryall Mayo, William Cayme, Robert Barfoot, Yeovil; Francis and William Russell, Wincanton. But gradually this class has either disappeared, as it has in the parishes of Over and Nether Compton, or been drawn off to other and more convenient places of worship. The dowlas weaving too has long since ceased. It may be interesting to note that in Mr. Vickary's time labourers in this neighbourhood were paid only sixteen pence a day and women half that, and bread was at least twice its present price. "Parson Vickary," as he was called, stuck heroically to his post,

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\* Hutchins' Dorset.

probably assisted by friends in Yeovil and Sherborne, until 1831 or 1832, when he resigned and retired to Wilton, though he occasionally visited the scenes of his former labours and occupied his old pulpit. He was the last settled minister. Since his time the minister's house and orchard have been let, and the rent has formed a principal part of the income of the place, the people having been able to contribute very little. Mr. Vickary died in 1845, and was buried in the chapel yard. There is a marble tablet to his memory in the chapel, erected by his children.

After Mr. Vickary's resignation, the pulpit was supplied for some years by students from the Rev. J. Juke's Academy at Yeovil. The late well-known Rev. J. De Kewer Williams, who was one of these students, preached his first sermon in the chapel; and Mr. Sharman is remembered by old people as having preached there more frequently than any other student. Mr. Sharman's visits resulted in his marrying Miss Christian Russell, of Compton, who was buried in the Chapel yard in 1872, aged 75. On Mr. Jukes' removal to Bedford in 1839, and the discontinuance of the Academy at Yeovil, the pulpit was supplied for some years by Mr. William Roberts, a bookseller of Sherborne. He died August 3rd, 1849, at the age of 42, from a chill caught by going to live in a new house (now Mr. McGann's) too soon after its completion, and was buried in the chapel yard. A stone over his grave states that it was erected to his memory by his fellow teachers in the Sherborne Sunday School. The work laid down by Mr. Roberts was taken up by two other earnest laymen connected with the church at Sherborne—Mr. J. B. Rawlings and Thomas Penn, who supplied the pulpit alternately; the ministers of Yeovil and Sherborne going over occasionally when baptism and the Lord's Supper were administered. Mr. Penn afterwards became a Baptist minister.

The responsibility for the services was next undertaken by Mr. George Thorne, a native of Compton, who after many years service in H.M. Excise, had retired to Yeovil. He found a mortgage on the chapel, held by Mr. T. R. Mayo, and was instrumental in getting it removed in 1858. He seems to have carried on the work until the appointment of Mr. William Robinson, an

evangelist, in November, 1861. Mr. Robinson left to study at Nottingham Institute at the end of 1863, and was afterwards minister at Hull and at Runcorn, and afterwards conformed and became a clergyman of the Established Church. He was followed by Mr. Obadiah Jenkins, another evangelist, who remained until June, 1865, when he was removed to Wiveliscombe. From this time to October 28, 1871, the services were supplied by Mr. Charles Dycear Gawler, of Ilchester, Mr. Edwards, of Sherborne, and Mr. Kellaway, of Yeovil, assisted no doubt by other friends. In 1871 the church received a legacy bequeathed by the late Mr. Thomas Ffooks, of Yeovil, whose interest in the place had survived the removal of his family, of £100, which is now invested in India Stock. Mr. Joseph Pitman, of Milborne Port, was appointed lay-pastor, and preached for the first time Dec. 31, 1871. He continued with great zeal and regularity until laid aside by the illness of which he died in Yeovil, May 27, 1880. In September, 1880, the Rev. Joseph Ogle, of Sherborne, became the honorary pastor, and has since arranged for the services, which are conducted regularly by earnest laymen, whose gratuitous services are much appreciated. In 1881 the old thatched roof was removed, and an entirely new slated roof substituted at a cost of £150, and in 1888 the interior of the chapel, which had become very dilapidated, was re-constructed—a new floor, new vestry, new seats, and new lighting arrangements being provided, and the pulpit lowered, at a cost of £200, all of which has been raised and paid, and the whole property is free of debt. The last improvement made it possible to hold a Sunday School in the premises, and this was established at the instance of Mr. S. Whitty Chandler, B.A., of Sherborne, by some of the young men in his Bible Class, led by Mr. D. Betten, and has been maintained with most gratifying results ever since.

In addition to the chapel and graveyard and the old minister's house and orchard, the church owns a burial ground in Nether Compton. This burial ground is noticeable for the high wall and handsome doorway of Ham Stone, which divides it from the road. A stranger once passing this doorway and enquiring of a rustic what the place was, was told "That's where they d' bury

the Presbyterian twoads." The wall was built out of a bequest. "John Hopkins, Esq. (of London), who died in 1732, and who got from his contemporaries the nick name of Vulture Hopkins, and who left by will £100 to repair the wall of and make a gateway to the burial-place of the Dissenters, near Sherborne, Dorsetshire."\* O.

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## CORFE CASTLE.

This picturesque spot among the Purbeck Hills is famous for its Castle, the grim ruins of which overshadow the little town. This Castle is specially associated with the murder of young King Edward at the instigation of his step-mother, the cruelties of John, and a memorable siege in the civil war.

Hutchins speaks of "Richard Hunt, Intruder," who seems to have been Rector in the time of the Commonwealth, in place of Dr. Gibbon, sequestered. An Intruder was a minister appointed to succeed one who had been suspended for being incompetent, scandalous, or otherwise objectionable to the ruling powers. At the Restoration Mr. Hunt was ejected, but we have been unable to trace his after career. Doubtless he was a man of Puritan sympathies, and Evangelical in his preaching.

The first Nonconformist services were held in the latter half of the last century, for we find the following licenses issued by the Quarter Sessions :

"201, dwelling house, of John Farwell, labourer, Corfe Castle, Presbyterians, 26th April, 1770."

"205, House on the West side of West Street, at the back of two Dwelling Houses, occupied by John Roe, and William Nounan, Corfe Castle, Presbyterians, certified by William Ingram, Corfe Castle (Ironmonger), 4th October, 1774."†

The late Mr. Hubbard, when sending the Registers in 1837 to Somerset House, made this statement, "The Dissenters have had a small place of worship in Corfe for 60 years, but they had no regular ordained minister, until 1810, the children before 1810

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\* Gents' Mag. ii., 132.

† Return of licenses, made by the Clerk of the Peace, Somerset House.



were baptized at the Church, or at the Old Independent Meeting, Wareham." The children of parents named Havilland, Stockley, Butler, George and John Smith, were baptized by Simon Reader, at Wareham, from 1742-1787. In 1803, a private house was opened for preaching, by a sermon from the Rev. J. Banister, of Wareham, who with the Rev. W. Sedcole, of Swanage, engaged to take a service at Corfe, alternately every fortnight.

In 1810, Thomas Denny (see Maiden Newton), was located here in connection with the Dorset Home Missionary Society, until the year 1813, and laboured earnestly in the town, and neighbouring villages. In 1811, the congregation sent through him the sum of £1 17s. 6d. to the "Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty."

The first Chapel was built probably on the site of the dwelling house for which a license was issued in 1774, and its opening is thus described: "January 18th, 1815, was opened at Corfe Castle, a neat chapel, built on the most economical plan, capable of holding 200 or 300 persons. It had been raised almost wholly by the fervent and indefatigable zeal of a respectable, but not opulent individual. A debt of £100 remained. At the same time the Rev. Mr. Shickle, of Hoxton Academy, was ordained over the recently formed church and congregation. Mr. Gilson, of Wareham, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Laxon, of Bere Regis, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Durant, of Poole, gave the charge; and in the evening, Mr. Bishop, of Ringwood, preached to the people. The congregations were crowded, attentive, and apparently deeply impressed with the services. The prospect of usefulness is considerable." \* But the young Pastor, who had raised such high expectations, was smitten down with brain fever, and died September 8th, aged 33. He was buried at Poole; a funeral sermon was preached at Corfe Castle by Mr. Durant, "to a most crowded and affected auditory." An aged saint informs the writer that she often heard her mother speak of going, with others, to Wych, and thence by boat to Poole, to shew the last mark of respect for their beloved pastor. The only child of Mr. Shickle

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\* Evangelical Magazine, 1815, p. 164.

married the Rev. J. W. Sampson, who has filled important pastorates in this county and elsewhere, and is now at Plympton. The County Home Missionary Society assisted in the support of the minister, and in its reports states that a Sunday School had been established, and that the attendance at chapel was good during the day, and at night crowded.

Samuel Hannaford seems to have taken the services in 1824-5, but it is doubtful if he were the pastor. George Hubbard, of Newport, in the Isle of Wight, had married the sister of John Brown, of Wareham, and this connection probably led him into Dorset. He supplied Corfe Castle in 1827, and was ordained 1829, at the same time as James Brown, in the Old Meeting at Wareham. The labouring class being at this time in a deplorable state of ignorance, the new pastor very soon started a Day School. In 1834, when the number of children was between 70 and 80, the room was closed against him and pulled down. Nothing daunted, he and his friends promptly converted the Chapel into a school-house during the week. Having secured, though at an excessive price, the only available bit of freehold, they proceeded to build a new Chapel, which was opened in 1835, and by the help of sympathising friends elsewhere was soon paid for. The British School was continued in the old leasehold chapel, and flourished many years; it was sustained mainly through the good pastor's unwearied efforts. In the earlier years of Mr. Hubbard's ministry, he was viewed with distrust and dislike by the local gentry, and even the class whom he specially sought to serve, failed to see in him a friend, indeed, at a time of political excitement, the prejudice against him was so strong that his effigy was burnt in the streets. With a brave heart he plodded on, keeping a cheerful temper, returning good for evil, ever ready with a kind word and a helping hand, so, long before the end, all opposition had been lived down, and the respect and affection of all parties had been won. He died peacefully in 1870, at the ripe age of 90, and was buried in the cemetery of the Old Meeting at Wareham. Mr. Hubbard, whilst holding fast to his principles, and ready to stand up for them when occasion required, had broad sympathies, and could

heartily pray "Grace be with *all* them that love our Lord Jesus Christ." Whilst his own services were rendered almost gratuitously, he generously remembered the little cause so dear to his heart, bequeathing for his successors a comfortable manse, pleasantly situated in full view of the castle, and making some provision for their support. He left also bequests of £50 each to the London Missionary, the Home Missionary Society, and the County Union. He also gave a sum, now amounting to about £300, for benevolent objects in Corfe, which is invested in ground rents at Boscombe. The income is used at the discretion of the present trustees, Messrs. H. C. Stockley, and P. P. Gillingham. As infirmity grew on the venerable pastor, he found it necessary to have an assistant, and among those who filled this office, mention may be made of G. G. Howden, who, after two years, health failing, removed to Australia, where he continued his ministry with considerable success; Thomas Sissons, who has since rendered good service to large churches at Woolwich and Beckenham, and is now pastor of Wycliffe Chapel, London; W. H. Mercer; Thomas Main; Daniel R. Vaughan; and J. R. F. Ross (see Bere Regis). In 1870, Joseph Scott, who had assisted Mr. Hubbard for six months, was invited to become his successor, but he retired early in 1894.

George Dixon, from Puriton, Somerset, came the same year remaining till 1881. In the spring of this year George Riggs Bawler, the present pastor, in response to a cordial call, entered upon the ministry, and though the sphere is limited, and a large congregation hardly to be expected, real and lasting work is being done. The communion plate is believed to be the gift of the honoured John Angell James, of Birmingham. Among the faithful and generous supporters in the past, we may mention the Smiths of Arfleet Mill, the Butlers (drapers), Dr. W. Miller, James Tucker, Thomas S. Jackson, Giles Stockley, John Luker, and Miss Hibbs. Among those trained in the place, who are now filling important and useful positions elsewhere, we may give the names of H. Goodchild, deacon of the Congregational Church, Stockwell, London, and H. Curtis Stockley, filling a similar office at Boscombe. Nor must we forget John Webber, a

devout and humble member of the church, who recently passed away ; though but a mason and worker in Purbeck marble, he read much, thought deeply, and possessed not a little poetic talent. As a specimen of his powers, an admiring friend has inscribed the following lines on the stone reared to his memory :

“ A withered leaf came whirling by,  
 Impelled by tempest rude ;  
 It sought the earth, but could not find  
 A resting place, though\* still the wind  
 The hapless leaf pursued.  
 And as I watched the restless leaf  
 Thus driven to and fro ;  
 A thought came next—a fleeting thought,  
 That all would seek in vain, who sought  
 A rest to find below.”

The present deacons are Charles Henry Battrick and George Payne.

The esteemed pastor and his attached flock have their place to fill and their work to do, though difficulties are not lacking, and several other places of worship exist ; anyhow, they are quietly witnessing for the Free Church principles, which we believe are taught in God's word, and which prevailed in the early churches. D.

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### CRIPPLESTYLE.

This hamlet is a part of the vast parish of Cranborne ; anything like a village does not exist, and scarcely three houses are found together. Formerly it was the custom of the lord of the manor to lease plots of land for lives, on easy terms, and the life could be renewed on the payment of a small fine. Upon their holdings the people built a cottage, and though they may have had to toil as hard as any day labourer, there was a feeling of independence. The house, often a poor one with mud walls, was their own in a sense, and so were the fields, which they, or

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\* When first printed, “ for ” was used, a more suitable word.



their fathers, had enclosed from the surrounding wastes of heath and furze. The custom does not now prevail; the little holdings, as they fall in, are attached to the adjacent farms, and the cottages are allowed to tumble down.

About the beginning of the century a few friends gathered for prayer and mutual edification, in the house of Mr. Edwardes, of Pye Lane. The nearest place of worship was some miles away. Gradually the spirit of devotion and religious fervour grew and spread, until the district was dotted over with little houses of prayer. The first public place of worship was erected on land leased to William Bailey, and the work was done chiefly by the people themselves. After the day's ordinary toil was over, they set to, the men digging and working the clay, and the women gathering heath from the common to bind it together. The building was opened December 11th, 1807, Mr. Loader (Fordingbridge) preaching in the morning from Psalm lxc. 17, and Mr. Ralph (Wimborne) in the afternoon from 2 Cor. x. 14. Though but a very plain, humble structure, it was dear to the people, as one which their own willing hands had helped to raise.

William Bailey, who had been the chief cottage preacher, was chosen pastor, December, 1808, and was ordained six months later. John Adams, of Verwood, became assistant pastor. A Church was formed, and John Cole was chosen deacon. The congregation is spoken of as exceeding two hundred, indeed it so increased that the place had to be enlarged once and again. The membership in 1830 was forty-four. In August, 1838, the worthy pastor, who was admirably adapted to the district, and who had shewn himself a good minister of Jesus Christ, passed away, to the deep regret and sorrow of his flock. Mr. Bailey gave the building to the people, and his only child, Mrs. Butler, gave at her decease in 1846, the other premises and lands, the income from which (about £12 a year) the Church received until the death of the last life, James Bailey, in 1893. For two years the place was supplied by friends in the vicinity. In 1840, Samuel Williams, educated in a Welsh College, and for two years under the Rev. Thomas Evans, of Shaftesbury, was invited to the pastorate, and was ordained, 1842. In the earlier years of his



ministry, Mr. Williams conducted a Sunday evening service at Cranborne, but this was relinquished when he purchased the chapel at Damerham, where, instead, he went to preach. The people were not in circumstances to do much towards the support of the pastor, but the Home Missionary Society and the County Association rendered substantial help. In 1861, a new room was built for the Day School, which was started in 1844, and the funds for the support of the teacher were collected by Mr. Williams up to the time of his decease. The Meeting House also was reseated and improved. We must not forget the Whit-Thursday gathering: the school children, headed by a brass band, walked up to Kingbarrow Hill, where a short service was held, and afterwards returned to tea; friends gathered from every direction, and in all sorts of conveyances; some years nearly a thousand were present to shew their sympathy with the good pastor and help him in his work. Mr. Williams, from failing health, resigned in 1881, and died March 26th, 1882. A testimonial was raised, amounting to £85, in gratitude for his long and successful ministry. The Marquis of Salisbury, the lord of the manor, more than once expressed his esteem for Mr. Williams, and his sense of the value of the work he had done, and generously built an addition to his house, which added much to the comfort of the pastor and his family. Dr. Rake, of Fordingbridge, a member of the Society of Friends, who took a deep interest in the cause, published a pamphlet, containing reminiscences of Mr. Williams, and a touching account of his funeral, which shews how his character and work were appreciated outside his own communion. Cripplestyle was highly favoured in being under the oversight of such men as William Bailey and Samuel Williams, simple, earnest, and full of sympathy, during the long space of seventy-one years.

After the resignation of Mr. Williams, the Rev. W. Densham, of Wareham, was requested to take charge of the place *pro. tem.* Occasional visits were paid, both on Sunday and week-day; Mr. Culver, of Ringwood, for the most part took the Sunday services, and with great acceptance. In June, 1882, Thomas Whitehome, from the Bristol Institute, undertook the work for twelve months,

and then removed to Baldock. B. D. W. Gregory, from New College, followed 1884-6. In October, 1887, James T. Davies became pastor. The old building, having become unsightly and unsuitable, and there being no house in the district which a minister could occupy, it was resolved to build a new chapel and manse. The Marquis of Salisbury, in 1887, kindly sold a central site, about one-third of an acre, for £10. The foundation stone of the new building, to be called "The Williams Memorial Chapel," was laid by Mr. Henry Williams, of Greenwich, October, 1888, and the opening took place on Whit-Thursday, 1889. The children met as usual on Kingbarrow Hill; divine service was held in the afternoon, preacher the Rev. J. Ogle, Secretary of the Dorset Association. About seven hundred sat down to tea in the old chapel and under a marquee. The public meeting in the evening was presided over by Mr. Westlake, who gave £105 to the building fund, and was addressed by neighbouring ministers and friends. Mr. R. Jennings, the treasurer, gave £50. The Williams' family were all present, eleven sons and daughters; they had worked earnestly, and together had contributed about £100 to the new buildings. During the proceedings, Mr. H. Williams presented a handsome Communion service to the Church from the family of the late pastor. The deficiency was stated to be about £48; after a few promises had been made, Mr. Ogle handed to the chairman a bank note for £25, sufficient to clear off all liabilities, and the chapel and manse were declared free of debt, amid much thankfulness and rejoicing. This great undertaking, costing upwards of £700, was thus brought to a successful issue by the generous assistance of friends far and near. Mr. Davis, who had married a daughter of the late Mr. Williams, resigned in 1891, and is now pastor of Bethnal Green Road Chapel, London. William Gathercole occupied the pulpit, 1892-4. Mr. T. T. Forsey became pastor, 1895. The present deacons are Charles Nicklen, Frank Viney, John Bailey, and Harry Bailey. Stephen Pope is superintendent of the Sunday School. The late Mr. Aaron Read, of Alderholt, was accustomed to supply gratuitously the wood and coal needed for the winter, and evinced his practical sympathy in other ways.

Unquestionably, the chapel, and the influences connected therewith, have done much to promote religion and morality in the district; not a few have been turned from evil ways; many have been guided and strengthened; whilst others have gone forth from this wild and secluded hamlet, with hallowed memories and fixed principles, to bear witness to the truth, and to be living epistles of Christ, read and known of all men.

DAMERHAM, though not in Dorset, should have a brief mention, as it has been worked in connection with Cripplestytle since 1853. In 1669, as we learn from returns made to the Archbishop, there were many Nonconformists in the parish, who attended conventicles there, or in other places. Among the licenses applied for, under King Charles's Indulgence, was the following: "The House of Mary Harris, of Damerham, in Wilts, Pres. 30th September, 1672." Nearly a century afterwards a license was obtained by James Dowding, and others, for holding service in a house, 7th January, 1768. The present chapel was built in 1837, the people themselves doing most of the work, but divine worship had been held and a Sunday School carried on in a cottage, for some years previously. The Dorset Association had given a small grant towards the expenses, as far back as 1825. David Brewer, a woodman, at Verwood, who possessed considerable preaching ability, was pastor for many years, being occasionally assisted by his brother, George Brewer. The Dorset Association gave the good man a small sum annually for the purchase of books for his own use, and paid the rent, £4 a year, charged for the building. On May 26th, 1853, the chapel was sold by the proprietor, Mr. G. Masters (through the kind intervention of the late Mrs. Mary Durant, of Poole), to the Rev. S. Williams, and others, for £100, and was put in trust. Mr. Williams secured the funds for its purchase and repair, and regularly supplied it on the Sunday evening, also going twice in the week to conduct a Bible Class and hold a service. It is still under the care of the minister of Cripplestytle, and the attendance is very good.

D.

## DORCHESTER.

Dorchester is the county town, and, as the name implies, was occupied and fortified by the Romans. The ancient fortifications are converted into pleasant shady walks. The Amphitheatre (known as Maumbury Rings), near the Railway Stations, is about the most perfect in England. The County Museum stands high among local institutions of the kind. This was one of the towns in which the "Bloody Assize" was held in 1685, when 292 were here sentenced to death for complicity in the Monmouth rebellion, though the majority were sold to work in West Indian plantations. The lodgings occupied by the infamous judge Jeffreys, and the chair in which he sat, are still pointed out. Hutchins speaks of the town as "deliciously situated," it has good railway accommodation, fine available building sites, and a large market, hence it is making rapid progress.

Nonconformity in Dorchester must be traced largely to the teaching and influence of John White, designated "the Patriarch of Dorchester." This remarkable man, who was a native of Oxfordshire, became Rector of Holy Trinity about 1606, and was soon a great power with the Puritan party in the town and county. Troubled by the aspect of things at home, Mr. White encouraged and assisted emigration to lands where a safe retreat might be found, and where persons might enjoy religious liberty in matters of worship and discipline. He projected the New Colony of Massachusetts, and, after many difficulties, obtained a charter, which included the territory between the Merrimac and Charles rivers. In 1629 three ships sailed for Salem, with 300 pilgrims, and two ministers who had been selected by Mr. White for the undertaking. In March, 1630, he went down to Plymouth to bid another party farewell, and to spend a day with them in fasting and prayer, himself preaching in the morning. This little company afterwards settled at a place in Massachusetts which they named Dorchester, out of respect for their revered pastor. "In 1643 (says Hutchins) he was chosen one of the Assembly of Divines, took the Covenant, and sat often with



them, shewing himself one of the most learned and moderate among them." In the Civil War a party of horse, under Prince Rupert, plundered his house, and carried away his library, on which he retired to London and became minister of the Savoy; he was afterwards Rector of Lambeth; when the war ceased he returned to Dorchester. Fuller, who knew him intimately, says of him: "He was a constant preacher, and by his wisdom and ministerial labours, Dorchester was greatly enriched with knowledge, piety, and industry, and had a patriarchial influence both in Old and New England." He helped to make this, perhaps, the most thoroughly Puritan town in the country. He died suddenly, June 21st, 1648, aged 72, and was buried in the porch of St. Peter's Church. He was great as an Expositor of Scripture, and his chief work was a "Commentary on the first three chapters of Genesis," a copy of which is in the local museum. Two daughters of Mr. White married ministers ejected in the county (John Wesley and Benjamin Way). The Rectory, in which he resided, is now a workshop belonging to the ironmongery business of Mr. C. J. Foster, J.P., the senior deacon of the Congregational Church.

John Endicott, who took a prominent part in connection with the New England settlements, deserves a brief notice. He was born at Dorchester in 1588, and received the impressions which made him a strong sincere Puritan from the ministry of Mr. Skelton and Mr. White. When a party of settlers was sent out from Dorchester, in 1628, he was appointed to take the lead. He laid the foundation of Salem, the first permanent town in Massachusetts, and became Governor of the Colony on several occasions. He removed from Salem to Boston, 1655, and died, March, 1665. He "was a fit instrument for this wilderness work, of courage, bold, undaunted, yet sociable, and of a cheerful spirit, loving and austere, applying himself to either, as occasion served." \* It may be added that the present wife of the Right Honourable Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, is a direct descendant of John Endicott. The three ministers in the town were ejected in 1662.

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\* Edward Johnson in "Wonder Working Providence."



William Benn, born in Cumberland, educated at Queen's College, Oxford, was invited in 1629 by Mr. White to Dorchester, "where, by his interest, he was made Rector of All Saints, and was in great repute among the Puritans; and (except two years that he attended Mr. White, at Lambeth) continued here till Bartholomew Day, 1662, when he was ejected for non-conformity. While rector of All Saints, he preached gratis to the prisoners at the gaol, and the room not being spacious enough, he procured a chapel to be built within the prison, in good part at his own charge. In 1654 he was one of the assistants to the commissioners for ejecting such as were called scandalous, ignorant, and insufficient ministers and schoolmasters. He lived at Dorchester till his death, but was often imprisoned and fined for preaching there and in the neighbourhood in conventicles."—Hutchins.

Mr. Benn, driven away by the Five Mile Act, resided, in 1669, at Maiden Newton; he availed himself of the King's Indulgence, and on May 1st, 1672, took out a license to be a Congregational teacher in the house of Philip Stansby, in Dorchester, and the house was licensed the same day. This devoted and faithful servant of Christ, who may be regarded as the first Nonconformist pastor in Dorchester, died March 22nd, 1680, and was buried in All Saints' churchyard. His chief literary work was a volume of twelve sermons on "Soul Prosperity," published after his decease.

George Hammond was ejected from Holy Trinity and St. Peter's, to which he had been appointed two years before. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin, where he was brought into contact with Archbishop Usher, who thought highly of him, and foretold that he would be a considerable man. "He was some time minister at Totnes, where just after he had been preaching with great seriousness about patience and resignation to the will of God, he had occasion for the exercise of these graces himself, by the loss of a child, who was killed by falling out of the window of an upper chamber."\* On April 11th, 1672, he was licensed as a Presbyterian teacher in any allowed place, and the

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\* Calamy's *Nonconformists' Memorial*, Vol. II., p. 128.

houses of John West and John Marsh, in Dorchester, were licensed for his use May 8th. The petition for the license of the houses was signed by John West, John Gilbert, Abraham Templeman, William Twiss, Samuel Symes, Richard Atkins, John Torrington, Thomas Hallett, and William Churchill. In 1677 he became pastor to a large congregation of Dissenters at Taunton in conjunction with Mr. George Newton. The persecutions which preceded, and the barbarous cruelties which followed the Monmouth Rebellion, drove him to London, where he became co-pastor of a congregation with Mr. Richard Steel, and at his decease succeeded him as sole pastor. He died October, 1705. He is thus described by Calamy: "An excellent scholar, a good critic, mighty in the Scripture, . . . of a very even temper, and a most peaceable healing spirit."\*

Joshua Churchill was ejected in 1662 from Fordington, which now forms part of the borough of Dorchester. He assisted Mr. Benn, and afterwards succeeded him as pastor of the persecuted flock in Dorchester. Among the returns made of Conventicles to the Archbishop we find the following: "1669, Fordington; 200 hearers: abettors, Mr. Arthur Hacklen, Mr. W. Benn, Mr. John Benn, Mr. Jonathan Ems, all of the parish; teachers, Benn and Churchill."

In the list of licences issued 1672, in the Public Record Office, we find that on the 17th April a license was granted to Josiah (mistake for Joshua) Churchill to be a Congregational teacher in his own house in Dorchester and that of Benjamin Devenish, at Fordington. The house of John Ingram, in Fordington, was also licensed as a Congregational meeting place April 22nd, 1672. Whilst Mr. Churchill was minister the Monmouth Rebellion occurred, in which doubtless some of his people were involved. We can gather but few particulars about him, and know not definitely the period of his decease, but it is supposed to have occurred in 1689. Messrs. Benn, Hammond, and Churchill were among the Dissenting ministers of Dorset whose signatures are appended

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\* Calamy, Vol. II., p. 128.

to the letter of thanks to the King, dated May 10th, 1672, for his Indulgence in granting liberty of worship.

Some other ministers, sufferers for conscience sake, who were connected with the town, demand a brief notice.

John Thompson, unable to conform, retired from Oxford to Dorchester, and was the associate of Mr. Benn, whose daughter he married. In 1670 he became the first stated pastor of the oldest Congregational Church in Bristol, which met in Castle Green.

Benjamin Way, descended from a good family long settled at Bridport, was ejected in 1662 from the living of Stafford, to which he had been instituted Feb. 27th, 1660. He had been previously vicar of Barking, Essex. Mr. Way, after his ejection, seems to have retired to Dorchester, where, May 1st, 1672, he took out a license to be a Congregational Teacher in the house of William Hayden, and the house was also licensed the same day as a Congregational meeting-place. He was one of the thirty-eight Nonconformist ministers in Dorset who joined in the letter of thanks to King Charles for his Indulgence. In 1676 he became the successor of Mr. Thompson as pastor of the church at Castle Green, Bristol, and died 1680. The following extract from the church-book at Castle Green would seem to indicate the existence of an organised Christian community at Dorchester. "1676. Nov. 4, Jane Way dismissed from a church at Dorchester, whereof she is a member. Removed thither again, and died in 1697." Doubtless the lady was Mr. Way's second wife; his first wife was the daughter of John White, by whom he had two sons that survived, Joseph the eldest, who was a merchant in Bristol, and Benjamin, a merchant in London. "In his last illness he frequently mentioned, with the greatest satisfaction, his having quitted his living in 1662, which was of £400 per annum value, for his conscience sake; using this expression on his death bed to his eldest son, 'I bless God that I did not submit to that burden of conformity.' ""\*

Among the ministers who suffered for their convictions near Dorchester mention may be made of Christopher Lawrence,

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\* Calamy, Vol. II., p. 187.

ejected from Came. He was a native of Dorchester, and resided there for a time after he was silenced. For his nonconformity he was cast into jail, where he contracted a disease that never left him. His latter days were spent at Frampton, where he died 1667. "He was a man of good learning, of a pleasant conversation, and a most inoffensive character." "Many of his friends, and some persons of rank, pressed him to conform, but he could not satisfy his conscience to do it."\*

Thomas Troyte was ejected at the Restoration from Owermoigne, of which he had been minister thirteen years; but we can gather with certainty no further particulars about him. Calamy says: "Probably he was the person who afterwards practised physic in Lincolnshire, and lived near Horncastle"

Edward Dammer, rector of Wyke Regis, and minister of the garrison at Jersey, in the great Civil War, was deprived of both offices at the Restoration. He took up his residence in Dorchester, and became steward for Denzil, Lord Holles; he preached occasionally, and was useful in many adjacent places. He was born in 1630, at Godmanstone, his father, John Dammer, being in a good social position. The wife of John Dammer died in 1670, and was buried at Godmanstone; when he lay dying, in 1675, he naturally wished to be interred near his wife, but this was refused, and he was buried at Nether Cerne. Hutchins makes the following reference to this example of the bigotry and bitterness of the times: "This person, it is conjectured, was the father of Edward Dammer, of Dorchester, and great-grandfather to the late Lord Dorchester, and was, perhaps, refused burial at Godmanston, where his wife was interred, on account of his Nonconformity, as it was at this period that the laws against sectarists were most rigorously enforced."

On April 22nd, 1672, the house of John Bingham, of Quarelston, in the parish of Stickland, was licensed for a Congregational Meeting place, and the same day Edward Dammer was licensed to be a Congregational teacher in the house of John Bingham. We learn from Hutchins that Mr. Bingham was Sheriff of Dorset in 1675, and that he died during

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\* Calamy, Vol. II., p. 124.



his year of office. Mr. Dammer's name is among the thirty-eight Dorset Nonconformist ministers who sent a letter of thanks to King Charles. It is said of him that "he was of the family of Lord Milton, and bred up a son for the ministry, who was a worthy person, and preached sometime at Ringwood." That son, named Joseph, died at Pensford, near Bath, August 16th, 1699, aged 34, and was buried among his kindred in Godmanstone churchyard. Hutchins intimates that the choice of the situation, and the direction of the bodies, north and south, was probably influenced by their nonconformity. The name is sometimes spelt Damer, and this is how it was spelt by other branches of the family living at Milton Abbas and Came House.

We learn from the statement of the jailor at Dorchester that five ministers were imprisoned there for an unlawful meeting at Shaston, and fined at the Assizes forty marks each. Mr. Hallett, one of the five, paid the fine, and was set at liberty, the other four, Messrs. Ince, Sacheverel, Bampfield, and ———— remained in gaol for a year and half, "lodging among the debtors, factious people had access to them, so that they secretly baptize infants and church women, are plentifully supplied with provisions, &c."\* In December, 1664, there were six ministers and seventy others in Dorchester prison for Nonconformity. † "The town is most factious, and has daily conventicles."

Though Congregational ministers had resided in Dorchester, and held services in private houses, it does not appear that a regular place of worship was built, or that a separate community was continued; those who held this form of church order united with the Presbyterians, who, to a large extent, were Congregational in practice, choosing their own officers and managing their own affairs, free from all external control; indeed, the Presbyterian form of church government does not seem to have been put in force in any of the southern counties. The dividing line was not very marked between the two denominations; perhaps the chief difference was this, whilst the Congregationalists invested the supreme power in the church—the body of professedly

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\* Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1663, p. 601.

† Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1664-5, p. 130.



Christian people—the Presbyterians gave that power to the trustees or subscribers. In 1691 a great meeting was held in London, at which a formal union was decided on; certain points of agreement were drawn up, and the more rigid aspects of Presbyterianism were kept out of view. Anyhow, the two bodies were united in Dorchester, and it must not be forgotten that the first ministers, William Benn and Joshua Churchill, described themselves as Congregational teachers.

The first meeting-house was in the Priory. Hutchins says of the house occupied by Denzil, Lord Holles, who died 1680, "Afterwards it was the Presbyterian meeting-house till about 1720." The building in Pease Lane was erected in 1719, a license was taken out as follows: "80, New built messuage, late land of George Gould, Pease Lane, Dorchester; Presbyterian; certified by John Gollop, jun., Robert Clapcott, Wm. Channing, 7th April, 1719."

It is supposed that Baruch Nowell succeeded Joshua Churchill in 1689. He is spoken of as "a man of good sense and generous principles, widely known and respected, yet not popular as a preacher." He was minister fifty years, dying in 1739 of small-pox.

James Kettle, from Evesham, became pastor in 1739, and at the end of seven years removed to Worcester, where he spent the greater part of his life. A gentleman living near Dorchester offered him preferment if he would conform, but he was steadfast, though well aware of the advantages offered.

Benjamin Spencer settled in 1748, but died of fever 1755, aged 28. Samuel Philipps became minister the same year, but he also died of fever 1761, aged 32. The father of Mr. Philipps was pastor of Hill Street Congregation, Poole, from which he was driven by the Arians in 1752.

Timothy Lamb removed from a church in London, and took the oversight from 1762 to 1772. He was born at Wimborne, and educated for the ministry by Mr. Simon Reader, at Wareham, and afterwards at an academy in London. He died early, having for some years been afflicted with hereditary gout. "Few persons could have had a larger

share than he had of bodily sufferings, and few could be more patient under them." Mr. Reader thought very highly of him, and preached a funeral sermon for him from Psalm lxxiii, 26. His son Joseph became minister at Weymouth and Cerne Abbas.

Abel Edwards, who had been Mr. Lamb's assistant for two years, succeeded him in 1772, was ordained the same year, and resigned 1813. In his time the minister, and the majority of the attendants, became Arian, and finally Unitarian. The foregoing particulars concerning the Pease Lane ministers are gathered mostly from Murch.\* The meeting-house has been disused as a place of worship for some thirty years past, and is now occupied as a Liberal Club. Its history illustrates the baneful influence of Arian teaching on the prosperity of Dissenting congregations, of which the West of England furnishes so many examples. "They (the Independents) continued stedfastly attached to those doctrines of religion which were held by the fathers of Nonconformity. Of an independent church falling into Arianism perhaps an instance cannot be found. . . . In consequence of this, their congregations, undefiled by the errors of the times, felt nothing of their desolating influence, but in most cases kept up and increased their numbers. . . . Many of the Presbyterians suspecting the soundness of the faith of their own ministry, forsook their communion, and joined the Congregational churches . . . not a few of the Presbyterian congregations adopted the Independent discipline, and joined that body."†

In November, 1775, three persons were named to serve as Sheriff of Dorset. On the 21st Feb. following John Meech, Esq., of Dorchester, was pricked by his Majesty in Council to serve the office, but he being a Dissenter and refusing to comply with the test (Act), W. Thompson was appointed in his stead."—Hutchins.

The members of the Pease Lane congregation, who believed in the divine nature and mission of our Lord, seceded, and built a place of worship in Durngate Street, which was opened July

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\* History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England.

† Bogue and Bennett's History of Dissenters, Vol. III., p. 331-2.

17th, 1776, the Rev. Mr. Shepperd preaching in the morning from Mark xvi. 15-16, and in the evening from John iii. 3, the Rev. Mr. Adam, in the afternoon, taking as his text, Revelations xxii. 10. Mr. Molland seems to have been the first pastor; the records speak of a people "gathered and united" under his ministry. This was, doubtless, the Thomas Molland, who, educated at Lady Huntingdon's College, came to labour as an Evangelist, about 1775, in Dorchester and the surrounding villages.\* He was evidently a brave, zealous man, but perhaps not always discreet. When he was disturbed and persecuted, he did not spare his adversaries by tongue or pen, and some lively scenes were witnessed, especially at Broadmayne. If he took charge of the recently formed church, then very small, in Durngate Street, it would account for its being often termed "Lady Huntingdon's Chapel." Philipps Mills became pastor from 1783 to 1793. Educated at Trevecca, Lady Huntingdon's College, he came to Dorchester as his first charge. Like Mr. Molland, he was full of Evangelistic fervour, and anxious to make known the glorious gospel in the adjacent villages. Though meeting with some opposition, he was cheered with not a little success, especially at Sydling. Whilst preaching in the Market-place, at Wareham, a blood vessel was ruptured, and his health from that time declined. He removed to Walworth, and died, 1796, aged 33. Mr. Gibbons followed, but his stay was short; we can gather nothing further about him.

Stephen William Underwood was pastor from 1796 to 1801. On March 8th, 1797, he preached two sermons on the occasion of a "General Fast," which was published under the title "God's Voice to England." He came from Middlesex, but we cannot trace his subsequent career.

James Higgs, trained at Newport Pagnell, was pastor at Banbury, whence he came to Dorchester, in 1802. "We are rejoiced to state that this Christian Society, after all the trying circumstances with which it has been called to struggle, is now happily reviving, and has the fairest prospect of prosperity,

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\* See Simon's Methodism in Dorset, p. 68.

under its present highly esteemed pastor.”\* Here “he continued usefully engaged. He was much tried by bereavements in his family, and by the loss of a considerable portion of his property, from confidence in a false friend.”† This devout and earnest servant of Jesus Christ removed in 1819 to Witney, in Oxfordshire.

Lemon Hall, trained at Hoxton Academy, preached his first sermon as pastor at Dorchester, September, 1812, from Gal. vi., 14, and his last, July 9th, 1826, from 2 Cor. xiii.<sup>a</sup>, 11. He was ordained July 8th, 1813, Messrs. Jeans, Cracknell, Dr. Simpson, Hooper, Durant, and Keynes taking part in the service. “The prospects are encouraging.” “But he was hindered in his work by, and suffered much annoyance from, the Antinomian leaven which prevailed in the church. He was sometimes reduced to great straits, but nothing could induce him to square his teachings to the false tastes and unscriptural opinions of his opponents. He regarded himself as witness for evangelical, practical truth, and as long as he held his post, resolved to be faithful to his Master, and to the souls committed to his trust.”‡ Mr. Hall removed in 1826 to Poyle, near Colnbrook, where he laboured with much comfort and success for 37 years, and died 1863. In the year 1822 there seems to have been a secession from Durngate Street, probably caused by doctrinal differences, and a room was opened in the “Greyhound” yard, South Street, in connection with the “Countess of Huntingdon” body. In November, 1822, the number of members was 27, several of whom resided at Broadmayne. We learn, from a statement made when the Baptismal Register was sent to Somerset House, that the congregation “never had a stated minister.” The Revs. Jos. H. Browning, John James, and others appear to have conducted the services and baptized the children. John Peaston was chosen deacon, and on May 2nd, 1825, he took out a license for holding Divine worship in a dwelling house at Fordington. A re-union

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\* Theological Magazine, March, 1803. † Evangelical Magazine, 1829.

‡ Congregational Year Book, 1864.



was happily effected in 1826, and the seceders returned to Durngate Street.

John Anderson became minister in 1828. The invitation sent to him contained 88 signatures. In 1841 he removed into Lincolnshire. The deacons in 1832 were John Parsons, Charles Crocker, Solomon Cosens, Edward Lester, and Thomas Logan. The minister and his people were zealous to make known the gospel in places around; rooms for preaching were opened at Winterborne St. Martin's and Stratton, and in 1834 services were commenced at Puddletown. In May, 1837, the Church mourns the decease of Joseph Browning, who had been a member for at least 45 years, a firm and generous supporter of the cause, and had filled the office of Deacon and Treasurer. He is spoken of as specially useful in visiting the sick, for which work he was admirably adapted.

John White Pope, afterwards Dr. Pope, received a call in 1842. The people, captivated by his eloquence and ability, invited him without due inquiry and consideration, and the result was disastrous; the peace of the church was disturbed, and many left. A considerable section of the members, with some of the deacons, attended the Baptist Chapel, and to the credit of the minister, Mr. Sincox, be it recorded, that when the cause of difference had passed away, he publicly urged the dissentients to return to and support their own place of worship.

John Knox Stallybrass, born 1823, in South East Siberia, where his father was engaged in missionary work, after a training at Coward College, undertook the pastorate at Dorchester in July, 1848; but a wider sphere opening at Bridport, he removed thither in 1852. After ministering to churches at Birmingham and Putney, he died at Shooter's Hill, November 1st, 1879. He was a man of wide culture, vigorous intellect, and eloquent speech.

John Winsor Sampson followed in 1852, from Plymouth, and remained about two years. He removed to the important church at Yeovil, and is now pastor at Plympton, Devon.

Josiah Miller, M.A., educated at New College, accepted a call in 1855; in 1860 he removed to Long Sutton, and from thence



to Newark; finally, he became Secretary of the London City Mission. He died, December, 1880. Mr. Miller, who won high esteem in his various spheres of labour, was a well-read, scholarly man, with considerable literary ability. His chief works were "Our Hymns: their Authors and Origin," "Our Dispensation," "Singers and Songs of the Church," and "Christianum Organum." The beautiful gothic church in South Street was built during Mr. Miller's ministry. The old chapel in Durngate Street being small, unsightly, and badly situated, it was resolved to erect a new building, in a central and public position. The land in South Street, on which two cottages stood, was purchased for about a £1,000 by Matthew Devenish, Esq. The foundation stone was laid, September 10th, 1856, by R. B. Sheridan, Esq., M.P. for the Borough, and the opening took place November 6th, 1857, Dr. Ferguson, of Ryde, preaching in the morning from Eph. iii., 8, and the Rev. John Graham, of Craven Chapel, London, in the evening, from Acts viii. 8. Dr. Halley took the services on the following Sunday. Mr. Devenish munificently contributed the cost of the land and windows. Exclusive of these gifts, the total expense amounted to £3,186. £800 on the day of opening remained to be raised. The building—an elegant specimen of the decorated gothic style, with Bath stone dressings, is a credit to the denomination, and an ornament to the town. Sitting accommodation is provided for 600 persons, which may be increased to 800, by the introduction of side galleries. The late Mr. W. Devenish, the great benefactor to our County Association, in 1860 gave £50 towards clearing off chapel debts in the county. £15 of this was applied to Dorchester, and soon afterwards all liabilities on the new building were discharged.

Joseph Fox, B.A., from New College, settled 1861, retiring 1869. Mr. and Mrs. Fox are said to have been useful, especially to the young.

Thomas Neave, educated at the Theological Hall, Edinburgh, was invited in 1869, having previously filled the pastorate at Beaminster for some years. Mr. Neave was a strong man every way; sound in judgment, placid in temper, logical in

argument, and ready in speech, he was an able and outspoken advocate of Liberal and Free Church principles, though careful to avoid what would give needless offence. In the year 1878 a suitable freehold house in Cornwall Road, healthily situated, and with a pleasant prospect over the public gardens, was secured as a manse, at an outlay altogether of about £850. A bequest by the late George Wood. Esq., received 1848, amounting to £203 5s. 10d., and donations (1867 and 1871) by Mr. Solomon Cozens, to the value of £65 14s. 2d., were applied towards meeting the cost of the manse; the balance was raised by the contributions of the people. Mr. Neave, in 1886, to the deep regret of a large circle of friends, removed with his family to New Zealand, where he ministers to congregations near Dunedin. The church sustained a serious loss in the decease of Mr. Matthew Devenish, April 21st, 1884, who had been a wise adviser, a generous supporter, and a staunch Dissenter.

William Gooby, who had successfully filled various pastorates, and had recently retired from Winchester, was invited in 1887. Mr. Gooby's ministry was highly appreciated, the attendance largely increased, and the outlook was most encouraging; but, alas! health broke down, and he felt compelled to resign in 1888. At the present time, with the aid of an assistant, he is pastor of a church at Burgess Hill, near Brighton. During Mr. Gooby's term of service, the splendid organ was renewed, largely through his guidance and effort, the cost of which, about £300, was met at the time.

James McClune Uffen, who had done good service at Sawston, and Nottingham, settled in 1891. The full confidence of the people has been secured, and the sympathies of the young enlisted; all the institutions connected with the church are in vigorous health, and the future is full of promise.

On the 1st of May, 1894, four cottages behind the chapel premises, and fronting Charles Street, were purchased for £675, with the view of eventually adding to the Sunday School accommodation. One of the cottages has been converted into five convenient class-rooms.

The present deacons are C. J. Foster, J.P., J. T. Cottman, J.

McNeil, T. Stickland (also superintendent of Sunday school), W. J. Barnfield, and W. C. Bartlett.

The founders of Nonconformity in Dorchester, Wm. Benn, George Hammond, and Joshua Churchill, were devout men, well taught in the Scriptures, of blameless life, and anxious above all to do the right at whatever cost; and such were the men, with scarcely an exception, who founded our churches in nearly every town, and in many of the villages of our county, men admirably fitted for their work, and whom any church, it might be thought, would seek by all means to retain. The rulers, however, in State and Church seemed infatuated, and took a course of action which all right minded persons now condemn as impolitic and anti-Christian. The Act of Uniformity was so framed that whilst the time-serving and self-seeking were not molested, the conscientious were compelled to withdraw. All honour to the men who were thus ready to sacrifice everything rather than displease their God and violate their sense of truth and righteousness! They were spiritual heroes of whom the world was not worthy!

Lives of great men all remind us,  
We can make our lives sublime.

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## HAWKCHURCH.

Hawkchurch is situated in the very heart of the Paradise of Dorset, and one of the best livings in the county is enjoyed by the rector of the parish. The return of Charles II. to England, and his Restoration to the throne of his fathers, in 1660, found the Rev. John Hodder in this beautiful spot, surrounded by richly wooded hills and fertile vales, and in the enjoyment of the rectory. "He was a man of excellent abilities, and a celebrated preacher. He was so much of a gentleman, and of such singular ingenuity," says Calamy, "that his very enemies admired him and were fond of his conversation." His loyalty to the King was undoubted. Of this he gave convincing proof in a letter prefixed to a sermon preached by his friend and neighbour, the Rev. Ames Short, of Lyme Regis, on the proclamation of

Charles II. He probably thought, as he had every right to think, as his distinguished neighbour, the Rev. John Hardy, of Symondsbury, thought, that after Charles' Declaration from Breda, "that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom," he had no cause to fear anything from the Restoration of the Stuarts. When, however, the Act of Uniformity was passed, he found himself face to face with a great alternative. He might conform to the requirements of the Act, and keep his snug parsonage, his ample living, and his place of honour and usefulness; or, he might keep a good conscience and part with all these things. Like about two thousand other clergymen, he chose the latter course, and on the 24th August, 1662, went out of the rectory. On his giving up the living he did not leave the neighbourhood, where the people were dear to him, and he had many friends. He continued to live in the village, most likely in a house put at his disposal by one of his friends, probably Thomas Moore, Esq., of Wyld Court. Nor did he cease to preach. The Church was closed to him, but the houses of his friends were opened. Among other places, he held services at Mr. Henley's mansion house, at Colway, near Lyme Regis, and probably at Mr. Moore's house, Wyld Court, where his old parishioners would have the opportunity of hearing him, and at Sir Edmund Prideaux's splendid mansion, Ford Abbey. The time came, however, when he could no longer reside in the village. The Five Mile Act, passed in 1669, forbade any ejected minister living within five miles of the place in which he had been minister. Mr. Hodder, accordingly, removed to Thorncombe, which was then reckoned in Devonshire, and outside the Bishop of Bristol's jurisdiction. \* There we find him in that year uniting with the Rev. Nicholas Wakely, the ejected minister of that parish, and the Rev. Mr. Bruncker, in conducting services, either in their own houses or in Ford Abbey. It was reported to the Archbishop of Canterbury that "about one hundred, sometimes more," attended, who are described as being of the "vulgar sort." Whether anything was

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\* Cod. Tenn.



done to prevent these services being held, or to punish the preachers, does not appear. But this is certain, that when Judge-Jefferys held the bloody Assizes, the fact that Prideaux had entertained Nonconformist preachers was remembered against him, and cost him the £15,000 which he had to pay the judge as the price of his liberty. In 1672, when a brief breathing space was given to the Nonconformists, by Charles II.'s declaration of Indulgence, which suspended the penal laws against Dissenters, we find Mr. Hodder still resident at Thorncombe, where, on May 8th, he licensed his house as a place of worship for "people called Presbyterians," and took out a license for himself as a Presbyterian teacher. On the same day a license was taken out for a service in the house of Thomas Moore, Esq. (Wyld Court), Hawkchurch. This Mr. Moore was son-in-law of Mr. Trenchard, of Wolveton, a famous Nonconformist family, and brother-in-law of Bampfield, sometime Speaker of the House of Commons, and of the Rev. Francis Bampfield, M.A., ejected from Sherborne.\* On the same day another license was taken out for a service in the house of John Gill, also in Hawkchurch, and for the Rev. John Gill, who had been ejected from Shute and Colyton. Mr. Hodder applied for all these licenses. And he seems to have been in correspondence with Nonconformist ministers all over the county, for he prepared a letter, dated May 10th, 1672, in which he, and 37 other Nonconformist ministers in Dorset, thanked the King for "your Majesties Royal Declaration of March 15th, and do from our souls bless God who hath put such a thing as this into the King's heart to extend so great a favour to us."

Though himself a Nonconformist, and deprived of his living for conscience sake, he appears to have kept up friendly relations with his successors, for in 1671 the parish register records the baptism of "Joan, daughter of John and Katharine Hodder," and in 1679, March 24th, the burial of "John Hodder, quondam rector de Hawkchurch." So the good man passes off the scene, taken away from the darker and more terrible days that were so soon to come, deluging this part of England with blood.

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\* See under Sherborne.



Nonconformity in Hawkchurch, as seen above, dates back to 1662. How it fared, after Mr. Hodder's death, is a question one would like to be able to answer in detail. It is quite certain that it never died out. From the records of the church at Axminster—a short four miles away—we find that there were many members of that church who lived at Hawkchurch. This is about the time Mr. Hodder died. For their convenience, and that of their families, services were conducted with more or less regularity in private houses in the village. Thus, in 1704, the house of Robert Pinney was licensed for worship; the house of Joseph Gillett, two years later, and in April, 1729, the house of Thomas Mitchell, who, we know, was a member of the Church at Axminster.\* Hawkchurch, in these early days, gave at least two ministers to important churches in our county. In 1687 Thomas Hoare † went to be minister of the Church at Beaminster and about ten years later Samuel Baker ‡ became minister of the Church at Bridport.

The Dissenters in the village appear to have been content to meet in private houses, when they did not go over the fields to Axminster, until the beginning of the present century. They might have been content to do so longer, but for the fact that in 1795 the Western Academy, once under the care of Mr. Rooker, at Bridport, was transferred to Axminster, to be under the care of the Rev. James Small, the minister there. This, of course, removed the principal difficulty in the way of their having a chapel of their own—the difficulty of getting the pulpit supplied with preachers. So in 1811, a Mr. Veryard built a little chapel, apparantly a very primitive affair, mud walled and thatched. In 1813 applica .cn was made to the Dorset Association for assistance, and an annual grant of £5 was made to the Rev. James Small for the expenses of his students going over thither. For more than thirty years these young men did good work for Christ in this village, and many a man, destined later on to sway great assemblies, got his first opportunities and earliest experiences in this tiny chapel. The attendance was never large.

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\* Axminster Ecc. 57.

† See under Beaminster.

‡ See under Bridport.

In 1820, when a Sunday School—the first in the village—was established, it varied in numbers from 40 to 150. In 1822 the adult hearers are reported as numbering 80, and the children in the Sunday School, 90. One evidence of the good work done was afforded about this time, when a young man of the congregation, named George Chick, offered himself as a Missionary mechanic. He was accepted by the London Missionary Society and sent out to Madagascar.

A heavy blow fell upon Hawkchurch, and many another village in the neighbourhood, in 1829, when the Western Academy was removed to Exeter, in consequence of Mr. Small's failing health. With the withdrawal of the students, upon whom they had been accustomed to depend for preachers, the difficulty as to supplies returned. Efforts, for a time apparently successful, were made to obtain a minister, and the Rev. Mr. Griffiths undertook the charge in the beginning of 1830, and was there for several years. He was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Robinson, who was here in 1838. How long he was there before and after that date is not known. But ultimately, as might have been expected, the effort to maintain a minister for Hawkchurch proved too much for the poor people, and too much for the poorer minister. The Rev. James Hargreaves, of Morecomb-lake, then undertook, in addition to his other labours, to take the chapel over as one of his preaching stations, sending lay preachers on Sunday as often as he could. During the time he had charge of the place the old chapel was destroyed by fire. The story goes, that an adjacent building, or rick, being on fire, an evil-minded man, perhaps one whose conscience had been pricked by the Word preached there, threw a forkful of burning straw on the low thatched roof, saying, "Let the ——— chapel burn too." The land on which it was built being only leasehold, no attempt was made to rebuild it. And so for many years the services had to be held once more in private houses. These were not always easily obtained. Every house in the village belongs to the rector in right of his rectory, and the tenants were sometimes afraid to allow their houses to be used for service, as their successors are sometimes afraid still to attend services in the

chapel, for fear of consequences. On Mr. Hargreaves' death, the work was continued by his successor, the Rev. S. Giblett. It seemed more than once as if the cause that had lived through the stormy days of persecution must be abandoned. But at length a better day dawned. The High Church Movement was represented in an extreme form in the services carried on in the parish church, whereupon Mr. Roper, a Bridport solicitor, who had a strong aversion to ritualism, volunteered substantial help towards the erection of a new chapel, where the simple gospel would be preached. A plot of land opposite the Post Office, on which was an old cottage, was bought, and steps were taken towards the building, when the rector intervened and claimed the land as part of his glebe and commenced legal proceedings. The case was heard at Dorchester, when the Lord Chief Justice decided that the site did not belong to the rector. The litigation involved an expense of over £70, and what was worse, involved delay. The chapel, which cost £600, was opened in 1878. But before the work could be finished Mr. Roper was dead, and a large part of his financial help was lost. With courage and perseverance the Rev. S. Giblett and the ministers of Bridport and Charmouth, managed at last to raise the whole of the money, and the chapel was and is free from debt. The friends from the neighbouring churches who had come forward to help to put the preaching of the pure gospel on a better footing, seeing that there was not another evangelical place of worship within three or four miles, decided that the work, especially the visitation of the people scattered over this wide area, needed more than occasional supplies. An evangelist was accordingly appointed to live and work in the neighbourhood under the direction of the Rev. S. Giblett, an arrangement that has continued ever since.

The following have been the evangelists:—1877, J. Teale, from the Bristol Institute; 1883, W. Mose; 1883-1889, H. Gibbons, from the Nottingham Institute, removed to Charmouth; F. Coram, left to become a student of the Western College, now minister of Beaminster; Ottwell Binns, left to become a student

of Western College, now minister of Portland; A. E. Read, the present evangelist.

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## HOWE EAST.

This is a hamlet in the parish of Kinson, situated about a mile north of Wallis Down, and half way between that place and the village of Kinson.

The present chapel was built in 1834, under the auspices, and mainly at the expense, of the ministers (Messrs. Durant and Mackenzie) and congregation at Skinner Street, Poole. Services may have been held in the place prior to 1834, but on this point we can gather no information. The pulpit was supplied by Poole friends, and the members were received into the church at Poole.

East Howe, being a remote and out of the way spot, it became difficult to find preachers, and the assistance of the Rev. Samuel Knell, of Throop (1857-1869), was sought, who took the oversight and provided supplies. The arrangement was in force in 1860, but we cannot discover just when it began or terminated. After this, East Howe became a separate church, independent alike of Poole and Throop, and preachers were found, and their expenses paid, by the people themselves.

Mr. Richard Miller, who had retired from business, and resided at Muscliffe, a gentleman of means and leisure, was fortunately able and willing to take up the work. For some years, until his removal to Poole, about 1871, he rendered valuable and useful service. Through his action, the freehold of the chapel and field was secured. He died July 8th, 1876, and was buried in the Poole Cemetery.

Since about 1873, the church at Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, has provided supplies, and, to some extent, teachers; indeed, this church has rendered invaluable assistance in various ways. The little chapel, at first somewhat plain and uncomfortable, has been improved at different times, and is now a neat commodious village sanctuary.



Steps were taken in 1896 to build a schoolroom, the need of which was much felt; on May 6th—a memorable occasion—foundation stones were laid by Mrs. George Pearce, Mrs. Mundell, Mrs. Kent, Mrs. Ossian Davies, and Mrs. Bright. The opening took place August 6th, 1896, by a service in the afternoon, the Rev. J. Ossian Davies preaching, and a public meeting in the evening. The room is nice and bright, admirably suited for its object, and the two class-rooms will be found very useful. A new stable has been added for the convenience of friends, who drive over to take the services. A substantial cottage has been also erected, now let with the field to the caretaker, and is a valuable addition to the chapel property.

Mr. F. P. Dolamore kindly gave his services as architect for the schoolroom, and Mr. Kent acted as honorary clerk of the works; while Mr. Ford carried out the contracts in a most satisfactory manner. One and all worked cheerfully and gave freely, and so it came to pass, that by the help of a special arrangement with a few friends, all liabilities were speedily discharged.

The Sunday School numbers upwards of 50, and Mr. Dolamore is Superintendent. A Band of Hope has made a promising start. The deacons are Thomas White, Frederick Ford, and Augustus White. At the close of the year 1897, after all expenses at East Howe had been met, the sum of £10 was forwarded to the Richmond Hill Village Mission Fund.

The attendance is good, the young are interested and enlisted, a warm earnest spirit prevails, and signs of real spiritual life are abundant. Much genuine work is being done for the Master, and His blessing has been graciously vouchsafed.

Mr. W. Saunders (born the same day as Mr. Gladstone) has taken charge of the station for many years, and presides at the Lord's Supper. When the schoolroom was opened, he presented on behalf of Mrs. Saunders and himself a silver communion service for the use of the Church. It was mainly through his generosity that the special arrangement was brought about, by which the debt on the new buildings was paid off. The fatherly interest and ready self-sacrifice he has shewn on



behalf of the place is deeply felt and appreciated. May the God of all grace support and comfort him, that at eventide it may be light !

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D.

## LONGHAM.

This is a hamlet bordering Hampshire, in the large parish of Hampreston, and is situated between Wimborne and Bournemouth ; it lies near the river Stour, and the soil seems unusually fertile.

The Baptists took out a license for preaching at Longham in the dwelling-house of George Saunders, 10th July, 1743 ; no services, so far as we can gather, have been conducted by that body within the present century.

The first Congregational chapel was opened Dec. 1st, 1819, Messrs. Griffin, of Portsea, and Durant, of Poole, preaching on the occasion. It seated upwards of 200 persons, and the cost, between £300 and £400, was chiefly met by Mr. Durant's congregation. A friend from Poole, who afterwards went to America (probably Mr. G. Kemp, jun.), having a summer residence at Longham, and being pained by the evident spiritual destitution of the district, procured a small room for Divine Service. This was soon filled to overflowing, and the chapel, as already stated, was erected. A Sunday School was also started, which soon numbered 150 children.

The attendance increasing, it became necessary to provide further accommodation, and a vestry communicating with the chapel and capable of seating 100 persons, was added.

The pulpit was chiefly supplied for several years by Mr. G. Kemp, and Mr. Hamer who went to reside at Longham, in a house near the river, until his removal to Spetisbury.

Mr. Joseph Notting, boot manufacturer, and tanner, of Poole, took charge of Longham about 1835, and was most zealous and indefatigable. The attendants became numerous, embracing several farmers and dairy people, and 50, afterwards increased to 60, were united in fellowship with the church at Poole, one of the ministers of that church presiding when the Lord's Supper

was observed at Longham. It became evident that a larger building was necessary, and Mr. Notting applied himself to this undertaking with much diligence and self-sacrifice, and the plans were drawn by the late Mr. W. Gollop. The foundation stone was laid April 18th, 1841; the Rev. A. Moreton Brown read the Scripture, and prayed; and the Rev. T. Durant delivered an appropriate address to a crowded assembly. The whole service was a delightful one.\*

The new building was opened December 29th, 1841, the Rev. R. Keynes, of Blandford, preaching in the morning, and the Rev. T. Adkins, of Southampton, in the evening, from Haggai ii., 9, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts." The attendance was very crowded, and the services are described by aged friends who were present as most refreshing and impressive. The chapel is a spacious, substantial, and imposing structure, in a commanding situation, with spire and clock—quite a village cathedral; on one side, by the public road, lies the graveyard, on the other side is a suitable manse with garden, and in the rear a large school-room, vestry, and stable accommodation for the convenience of those who drove to the services. Six cottages were bought to enlarge the space. When the buildings were projected, the cost was estimated at about £1,000; but we learn from an appeal, sent out August, 1849, signed by T. Durant and E. R. Conder, that the actual cost amounted to no less than £2,919 15s. 11d. As some excuse for this large outlay, it may be added, that a belief prevailed that Longham was to be made a model village, and so it was deemed the right thing to put up a model chapel, which should correspond therewith. Mr. Notting, sanguine and resolute, turned a deaf ear to the remonstrances of Mr. Durant and other friends, against what seemed extravagance. Viewed in the light of subsequent events, it must be felt that there was a lack of discretion, and that such a large expenditure could not be justified. It is believed that Mr. Notting was reimbursed a very large proportion of the sums expended by him. He also supported a Day School for many years, which greatly

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\* Evangelical Magazine, 1841.

prospered; at one time this was conducted by Miss Calver, a relative, who survived him, and died in the manse. But reverses came upon him, and he was reduced to poverty. In the latter years of his life, Mr. Notting removed to Longham, living for a time in the vestry, and then removing into the manse (built 1859). The County Association and various friends gave him assistance. Whilst walking across the moors to Bournemouth, which he was appointed to visit as an Evangelist, he fell, and sustained injuries which necessitated his removal to Dorchester Hospital, and from which he never recovered. Whilst he was indisposed, Mr. W. Saunders (then living in the place, and now having the care of East Howe), with other friends, undertook the services. Mr. Notting died July 19th, 1863, aged 67, and was buried in the graveyard near the buildings in which he had laboured faithfully so long, and which he had spent his substance so freely to raise.

After Mr. Notting's decease, Samuel Patton took charge of the place for about two years. His name is also associated with West Lulworth and East Knowle as minister, and he is now at Titchfield, Hants. For some time friends at Poole carried on the services, then the place was put under Wimborne, and Samuel Hillier, assistant to the Rev. J. Keynes, had the care of Longham in connection with Sturminster Marshall. On the removal of Mr. Hillier, the chapel was again supplied from Poole, but not with much heartiness or regularity, indeed for some years the fine building was actually closed, the faithful few meeting in the school-room, and the manse was let to two families of working people.

In 1889, Longham was transferred to the care of Richmond Hill Church, Bournemouth. The services of Mr. W. Robinson were secured, but he remained only about a year.

In the spring of 1891, George Henry White, who had been pastor at Ringwood for some years, accepted a cordial invitation, and is still the minister.

In 1892, George Belben, Esq., of Poole, and Holmwood Park, Longham, though a member of the Church of England, generously offered £100 towards the renovation of the chapel premises,

which had become delapidated. Thus encouraged, the people set to work ; the guidance of Mr. T. Stephens, architect, of Bournemouth, was sought, and Messrs. McWilliam and Son took the contract. The pulpit was reduced, the pews lowered, two class-rooms constructed near the entrance, which can be used as part of the chapel if required, a good hot water heating apparatus introduced, &c.

The re-opening took place October 16th, 1892, the pastor preaching morning and evening, and the Rev. J. Ossian Davies, of Richmond Hill, in the afternoon. A public meeting was held next evening, T. J. Hankinson, Esq., in the chair, when stirring and hopeful addresses were given by various ministers and friends. The total cost (£352) was soon defrayed, the Richmond Hill Church helping largely, and the Coward trustees sending a donation of £10. In 1894 the chapel premises were all legally conveyed to the Richmond Hill Church, and that church guarantees the stipend of the minister.

In 1895 the school-room was re-seated and restored, at a cost of £25.

As to the Sunday school the numbers on the books are—teachers, 18 ; scholars, 136 ; superintendent, Mr. T. K. Sutton ; the clothing club in 1896 returned to depositors, with the bonus added, the sum of £37 17s. 5d. There is a Band of Hope numbering upwards of sixty, and about one hundred (juveniles and adults) are members of the Independent Order of Rechabites. The pastor's Bible class on Friday evening averages twenty. The Congregationalists have the field all to themselves, and they are evidently doing what they can to promote the intellectual, moral, and spiritual interests of the people. The last Report speaks thankfully and hopefully of the state of things, "There is life and energy all around. Our sanctuary is still the centre of active effort." May the valued and faithful pastor continue to receive evidences of the Master's presence and power, and may the future be even more fruitful than the past ! D.

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## WEST LULWORTH.

This retired spot is much prized by those acquainted with it ; its little Cove, about a mile in circumference, having a narrow entrance flanked by Portland rocks, with strangely contorted strata of the Purbeck series on the south-east, is described by Black as "A sheltered nook of exquisite beauty, which has no equal on the Dorsetshire coast." The village lies among lofty breezy downs, from which fine views can be obtained of the headlands, stretching from Portland Bill on the west to St. Alban's Head on the east. It is said that the background of Millais' picture, "The Romans leaving Engand," is part of the Lulworth coast.

Nonconformist services seem to have been held here at a distant date. A license was taken out for the "dwelling house of John Slaughter (tide waiter), 8th Oct., 1776." Adolphus Erlebach, the first pastor, came here in Feb. 1835, under the auspices of the Home Missionary Society. He was of German extraction, and when the district in which he lived passed under the rule of Napoleon, to escape conscription he fled to England. He strolled into Sion Chapel, London, where he heard the Divine word which laid hold of him and changed his life. He soon became a preacher, and acted as an evangelist in various places. He was sent to Wool in the autumn of 1833, and worked the district around. Services had been held here in a cottage in connection with the West-street Church, Wareham, and for some years the County Association made a grant of £5 or £6. From West Lulworth he conducted services at Winfrith. In 1841 he visited the coastguard houses at Whitenose, which were two miles from any place of worship, and sought permission to hold services, but this was refused. Two ladies at Lulworth zealous and faithful friends, the Misses Hayne, in 1842 engaged and fitted up a room for preaching in the village of Chaldon Herring ; as many as fifty attended, and the work was continued by Mr. Erlebach till prevented by infirmity. In his diary the good pastor gives a vivid description of his journey home one



evening in a hurricane ; the wind blew out his light, he lost his way in a ploughed field, and fell into a pit, fortunately without being seriously hurt. It may be added that Dissenting worship was held in this village at an early period, as appears from the following licenses : "The house of William Toop, in Chaldon parish, Dorset, June, 1572." "81, House of George Lillington, yeoman, Chaldon Herring, Presbyterians, certified by George Sparks, 7th April, 1719." In the returns for 1715 Chaldon is mentioned as having a Presbyterian place of worship. Mr. Erlebach also visited East Lulworth, but found it impossible to obtain a room for preaching. It seems that Judith Tewkesbury (see Wareham) took out a license for her own house 17th April, 1798. Among the preachers was the Rev. E. Ashburner, of Poole, who came once a month, and was frequently threatened by the Roman Catholic inhabitants.

In 1845 the church was formed, consisting of eight members. Difficulties and discouragements were many. At one time the worthy pastor complains of the efforts of a Puseyite curate to prevent people coming to hear the word, and bribing them with gifts, dinners, and promises. In 1857 he mourns the loss of Captain Rains, aged 88, Mr. Chapman, and Miss M. A. Hayne, faithful friends and efficient helpers of the little cause. Miss Hayne died in 1859, full of faith and hope. Mr. Erlebach was evidently a devout, humble, kindly man, much esteemed and loved. In his latter days, when unequal to public work, the services were taken mostly by the students under the Rev. E. R. Conder, M.A., of Poole. He died 1864.

The services were undertaken for a time by W. W. Sherren, afterwards at Portland ; S. Patton, who removed to East Knoyle ; and D. Thomas, who in 1869 accepted a call to Cerne Abbas. The two cottages used for worship hitherto, being small and unsuitable, an iron structure to seat 120 was erected on a suitable site, and opened June, 1869. The Rev. R. S. Ashton, B.A. (Weymouth), preached in the afternoon from Heb. xiii., 8 : "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The singing was led by the Wareham choir. Tea was provided under a marquee, at which 150 sat down. The evening meeting was

presided over by C. Jupe, Esq., of Mere, who gave £20 to the building fund, and addresses were given by Revs. W. Lewis, S. Patton, D. Thomas, G. Hinds, B. Gray, B.A., W. Mead, &c. Friends gathered from Dorchester, Wareham, and other inland places, and a large number came by boat from Weymouth. The weather was beautiful, and altogether it was a happy and hopeful day. The success of the movement must be ascribed mainly to the generous and persevering efforts of Mr. Mead, of Monastery Farm, and to the liberal assistance of Mr. and Miss Beaton, of Burngate. The total cost, including boundary walls, &c., was about £250, and this was all raised by the day of opening.

D. A. Brown became minister in 1869, and remained two years and a half. Edwin Rose followed, but in a few months retired from illhealth, and went to Canada.

A student of New College, Alfred Chalmers Fisher, took charge for a while in the summer of 1876, and his mother and sisters came to stay with him. The holiday, he wrote, was turning out the happiest he had ever spent. On July 22nd, he went down to bathe in the Cove; the day was hot, but the water very cold, largely owing to freshwater springs. It is supposed the sudden change of temperature brought on cramp; he sank, and was taken out lifeless. He was a gifted and popular speaker, and full of enthusiastic projects and hopes. Thus a promising career came to an untimely end.

Walter Ebbs, from New College, became minister in 1877, and was ordained July 4th; his tutor, Dr. Newth, giving the charge from Acts vi., 4, and his former pastor, the Rev. J. C. H. Harrison, addressing the people in the evening. Mr. Ebbs, to the deep regret of his own flock and many friends around, resigned in November, 1881, and is now pastor of the church at Puddletown.

R. F. Brown had charge 1884-6, and D. Davis 1887-9. From the decease and departure of valued friends, a serious decline in numbers was visible. Mr. and Mrs. Gillingham had removed from Hambro' Farm to New Zealand. Mr. and Miss Ellis, of Burngate, had passed to join the church above, and the heaviest loss of all was the death of Mr. Mead, July 2nd, 1884, from an accident when driving to chapel on the

Sunday morning. Mr. Mead and his family had taken the deepest interest in the place, had rendered it all the assistance in their power, and were ever ready to welcome the ministers and supplies to their hospitable table. The loss of these three substantial and estimable families, members of the church, greatly diminished the attendance. By some inadvertence the renewal of the license according to the lease had not been applied for, and soon after the decease of Mrs. Mead, in May 1888, notice was given from the Estate office that the place must be closed. After some months permission was given to renew the services, and the minister of Wareham was requested by the County Association to take the oversight; he provided supplies for the pulpit, going himself once a month, and occasionally visiting the people on the week day. Students were obtained for the holidays, and now and then a minister was secured for a few weeks. It being thought desirable to have a man on the spot, the services of Mr. George Clarke were enlisted, who laboured earnestly for more than two years and a half. The former arrangement was again adopted, and students from Mansfield College, Oxford, spent their holidays here. In 1895 the building was renovated both inside and out at a cost of £34, which was all raised at the time. At the decease, in 1896, of Miss Erlebach, who had been a firm friend of the cause, a successful effort was made to rent as a manse the house in which she and her father, the first pastor, had resided for fifty-three years. Woodland Erlebach, Esq., lent valuable assistance in securing this result, and he with other representatives of Miss Erlebach generously gave up a quantity of furniture, utensils, books, &c., for the use of the minister, and with additional articles supplied by the Rev. J. Ogle, the house is fairly furnished. In October, 1896, the Rev. F. Vaughan, well known in the county as pastor at Broadwindsor and Puddletown, and who founded the Congregational Church at Boscombe, undertook the work with much hope of success, and real progress has already been made. Mr. Richard Beaton, Miss Eunice Beaton, and Miss Ann Beaton, left sums of money for the use of the minister, which produce a yearly income of about £23. The present state of things is not bright, but the village is likely

to grow and Nonconformist visitors to increase, so it is a case of "holding the fort." But the good Lord can work by few as well as by many; our feebleness is linked with this Almighty power, and anyhow our labours for Him cannot be in vain.

D.

## LYME REGIS.

As it would be impossible to exaggerate the romantic beauty of the situation of Lyme Regis, so it would be impossible to exaggerate the variety and interest of its history, from its incorporation by Royal Charter in 1288 down to the present century. Ecclesiastics, merchants, adventurers, smugglers, soldiers, sailors, statesmen,—men famous in literature, in art, and in religion, pass in quick succession across its stage. Here Dane and Frenchman, and the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, have landed with hostile forces. Here great battles have been fought and won and lost. Here the men have withstood a seige until utterly weary, when the women have donned their cloaks and hats and manned the ramparts in their stead. Here the Black Death first began those ravages that laid low more than a third of the population of this island. Here the people have for ages fought with the sea, more terrible than hostile armies, and reared and re-reared a harbour called "the Cobb," that is said to have no fellow in this or in any other land. Hither fled King Charles after Cromwell's "crowning mercy," the battle of Worcester. Here Captain Coram, the founder of the great Foundling Hospital, first saw the light. And here Fielding wooed and won and lost the lady afterwards immortalised as "Amelia."

In this interesting old borough the Congregational Church dates back to Black Bartholomew Day, 1662. The story begins with the Rev. Ames Short, M.A., of Exeter College, Oxford, who, after having been first Chaplain to Lady Clark in Suffolk, and then five years minister of Topsham, Devon, accepted a pressing invitation to become Vicar of Lyme in 1650. Here he



continued until ejected for non-compliance with the Act of Uniformity. Being much respected by the neighbouring gentry he was often and strongly urged to put aside his scruples. But in vain. On leaving the parish church he held services in his own house and elsewhere, sometimes among the cliffs by the shore, some of which are known from this fact as Whitechapel to this day. In thus following his conscience, Mr. Short chose a thorny road. His own father, a gentleman of good estate in Devon, was so exasperated with him that he cut him out of his will. And the men who had admired him when he preached in the parish church and enjoyed the status and income of the vicarage, being either destitute of conscience themselves or having consciences that were "as good as new, having never been used," became his bitterest foes. In a letter, dated April 24th, 1685, preserved among the State Papers, Seth, Bishop of Exeter, writing to the Archbishop of Canterbury, says, "that he finds forty revolted ministers nestling in the city, and no power to remove them." He specially "begs authority to disable Ames Short, of Lyme, from making pestilent excursions into his diocese." \* The power the bishop sought was speedily furnished by the Five Mile Act. On the passing of that Act, the county troops often searched for Mr. Short. On one occasion, enraged at their disappointment, they put a pistol to the breast of his son, and threatened to shoot him unless he told where his father was, and as they were searching the chimneys, chests, etc., they threatened the maid-servant in the same way, when she said: "My master does not hide himself in such places; he has a better protector;" to which she had this reply: "The devil take him and his protector too." A little later, Captain Gregory Alford, a bitter persecutor of dissenters, made an absurd accusation against him, saying that he had been seen at the head of 200 men, and pretended to support the accusation by putting in rules that he had made years before, when Vicar, for those who desired to take the Lord's Supper. This, absurd as it was, gave him much trouble, and obliged him to go to London and lie in hiding some time. When Parliament met in 1668, these so-called

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\* Calendar of State Papers: Domestic, 1664-5.



dangerous papers were read in a committee, but none of the things whereof he was accused being found in them, the matter dropped, and Mr. Short returned to his work. In the following year he was reported to the Archbishop to be holding services in defiance of the law, at Lyme and at Winsham, and at Colyton, "sometimes in one house, sometimes in another, and in fields and orchards," and at Batcombe, Somerset, in association with Mr. Richard Allein and Mr. Hodder, "at the house of Thomas Moore, Esq."\* Shortly afterward the cloud seemed to lift, Charles issued his famous Indulgence in 1672, and Mr. Short was the first minister in Dorset to avail himself of it, taking out a license under it to hold services in his own house. And in the same year the first Meeting-house was built in George's Court. The time of peace was not, however, to last long. In 1682, he was "wanted" again for holding services which were unlawful under the Conventicle Act. "As soon as the congregation had assembled in the meeting-house, Captain G. Alford assailed with his constables the door, Sunday, 30th January." In anticipation of some such disturbance, the door had been, as was usual with dissenters at that time, barricaded, so as to cause delay and give time, while the door was being broken open, for the minister and others to escape. "By the time he had broken in the door, the Rev. Ames Short . . . and many of the male part of the congregation had escaped. Thirty men and eighty women remained within to stand the gaze of the terrible magistrate, who took their names to proceed against them 'ackording to law.' This magistrate wrote: 'This is the head Conventicle of all the country—breaking the neck off this, the pest here will vanish away. . . . It's great pity, but the house, or at least, the seats, pulpit and galleries, were pulled down, for I hear that the last night they had agayne a meeting there,'"+ which gives us some insight into the place of meeting and the spirit of the people. Mr. Short was seized at Mr. John Storr's house in Exeter, and imprisoned for six months. The pious wish above expressed was not long in being fulfilled, for on July 7th, 1683, Mr. Strode, of Parnham, near Beaminster, approved himself "a very zealous

\* Cod. Tenn.      † State Paper Office. Sir L. Jenkins' Domestic Collection.

loyal person." He missed the preacher, but destroyed all the seats and pulpit of the Meeting house, and then proceeded to Bridport and did the same work of destruction there.\* The Bishop of Bristol wrote to request that the government would send Mr. Strode a letter of encouragement, which "would be of great use."

If the minister suffered so did the members of his flock. "Among the archives of the Corporation of Lyme is 'a register booke of misdemeanours and punishments in the maioralitie of Mr. Robert Jones (who lived in the great house in Broad Street) begining the 1st of October, 1683.' Nearly all the entries record persecution.'" The first, made three months after the pulpit, &c., had been destroyed, is as follows: "Oct. 15, 1683. Eight persons (whose names are entered) fined for having been at a conventicle, from £20 to 5s. each. They are very poor and have no goods nor chattels." "Nov. 8, 1683. Six persons for having been at a conventicle, 15d. each." "Jany. 14, 1683-4. Twenty-six persons 3s. each as absentees from chureh for three Sundays,"† and so on and so on. It was during this period that the poor persecuted flock began to meet among the cliffs, as above stated. In 1685 Mr. Short was convicted at Lyme of holding services once more, and sent to Dorchester Jail for five months. This must have been in the early part of the year, for before Monmouth landed at Lyme in June of that year, he was sent to Portsmouth with some others, and there laid in a dungeon. This was done in obedience to a royal order, requiring the lord-lieutenants of counties to seize and apprehend "all disaffected and suspicious persons, and particularly all nonconformist ministers."‡ This imprisonment probably saved Mr. Short's life. It was like Luther's incarceration in the Wartburg, it kept him out of harm's way. Monmouth's standard was joined by men from almost all the Nonconformist churches of Somerset, Dorset, and Devon, and no doubt some of Mr. Short's congregation were to be found in his ranks, taking up arms for what has

\* State Paper Office. Sir L. Jenkins' Domestic Collection. Quoted in Roberts' "Monmouth."

† Roberts' "Monmouth," ii, 274. ‡ Hist. MSS. Commission, ii., p. 159.

ever been dear to the Dissenters—civil and religious liberty and the Protestant faith. It is very unlikely that the minister would have countenanced the rebellion if he had been at liberty, for he was an ardent Royalist, as the only published sermon of his that has come down to us shows. But we know how furious and indiscriminating was the storm that came after the fatal battle of Sedgmoor on any and everybody that could, by any contrivance, be connected with Monmouth. At the Bloody Assizes at Dorchester, December, 1685, a Mrs. Brown, of Lyme, was charged with having jokingly said to a tax-collector, “I will pay my excise to King Monmouth,” and Jeffreys sentenced her to be publicly whipped in every market town in Dorset—a punishment rigidly inflicted. One poor fellow was sentenced to death for having supplied Monmouth’s horse with three pennyworth of hay. And if Mr. Short had been at liberty it would have gone hard with the enemies of Dissent if they could not have trumped up some charge against him; and, once before Jeffreys, his doom would have been sealed, for he did not need evidence, as he said, “I can smell a Presbyterian forty miles.” Happily he was out of the way. But he could not help knowing of, perhaps seeing, the dreadful work that followed. Jeffreys boasted that he had in that one circuit condemned more men to death than all the judges from the Norman Conquest put together. Batches of the victims were sent to the different towns of the West for execution in order to strike terror into the hearts of the people. Twelve were executed at Lyme, one of whom was Mr. Sampson Larke, a former Baptist minister of the place. They were not executed as the condemned are to-day, but with many barbarous accompaniments. Here is an extract from Jeffrey’s prescript to the sheriff: “These . . . require you . . . to erect a gallows in the most public place . . . and . . . provide halters to hang them, with a sufficient number of faggots to burn the bowells, and a furnace or cauldron to boil their heads and quarters, and salt to boil them with, half a bushel to each traitor, and tar to tar them with, and a sufficient number of spears and poles to fix and place their heads and quarters. . . . You are also to provide an axe and a cleaver for the quartering

the said rebels.”\* They were to be hung, drawn and quartered, and their heads exposed in public places.

At the quarter sessions of Devon, held October 5th, 1685, the magistrates made an order, which the Bishop of Exeter required to be read in all the churches of his diocese, on October 15th, in which they say, “we have by experience found that the dissenters are no more to be trusted in any civil society . . . than beasts of prey without chains and fetters,” and they proceed to say that whereas their ministers, “under pretence of religion, have seduced the unwary from their allegiance and duty,” they offer a reward of £3 for the apprehension of any such minister, “instead of the 40s. before offered.”†

Mr. Short was for a long time summoned to appear at every assize, and at last outlawed. But none of these things moved him. He neither repented of his nonconformity, nor was dejected at his sufferings, but often declared that he never enjoyed sweeter communication with God, or had greater comfort in his own mind, than when his persecution was most bitter. His troubles came to an end in 1687, when his enemies were commanded to release him from prison, and to cease their persecution of him and his friend, the ejected schoolmaster of Lyme, Mr. John Kerridge, by an order in Council still preserved in the borough archives, dated January 9th, 1686-7.

He was now at liberty to exercise his ministry in public, and here, August 25th, 1687, eight candidates for the ministry (of whom Mr. Hoare, of Beaminster, was one) were publicly ordained. His long and useful life was ended at Exeter, at the house of his friend Mr. Pym, where he was seized with apoplexy, July 15th, 1697, aged 81. He is described as being “a genteel, well-bred man, grave and serious, yet pleasant in conversation.”

His son, undeterred by the sufferings of his father, in which all his household must have had a share, was a firm Nonconformist. He received young men to educate for the ministry, first at Lyme and afterwards at Colyton (where he was succeeded by the Rev. Matthew Tongood). He died pastor of a congregation in London, and appears to have been one of the first

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\* G. E. R. Pulman's “Book of the Axe,” p. 272. † Roberts' Monmouth ii, 250



administrators of the Congregational Fund Board, established in 1695, for the purpose of helping poor Congregational churches and ministers. \*

Mr. Kerridge, the schoolmaster ejected from his office by the same Act that removed Mr. Short from the vicarage—"a sober, learned, and honest man,"—became minister of the church at Colyton, where he died, April 15th, 1705.

The Rev. Matthew Gay succeeded Mr. Short, and laboured here for thirty-six years (1698 to 1734). Little is known about him except that, during the latter part of his ministry, his bodily infirmities were very great, yet not so as to interfere with the clearness of his mind, or the zeal of his heart. He is reported to have been "a burning and a shining light" in the midst of the surrounding darkness. In 1715 he had a congregation of 300. One anecdote is preserved of him, which shows that he had a grim sense of humour, though we may not approve of the occasion on which it was displayed. It is said that he was once greatly pressed to preach a funeral sermon (that delight of our ancestors) for an ungodly woman in his congregation. For some time he refused, but at length consented and actually took as text Rev. ii., 21!

The next minister was the Rev. John Whitty, a native of Axminster, and a near relative of the inventor and original maker of the Axminster carpets. Educated under Mr. Grove at Taunton, he first settled at Waytown, removing to Lyme in 1735. After he had been here some time the congregation became too small for the Old Meeting-house, and the people determined to build a new chapel. In 1746 they bought the site of the present building from the corporation (how times had changed!) But it was nine years before the building was completed. The war with France which had broken out shortly before the land was bought, proved disastrous to the trading interests of Lyme, which then received a check it has never wholly recovered. Up to that time the merchants had exported linens to Morlaix, where they had extensive warehouses, and imported tobacco and West India

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\* Fund Board Minutes.



produce, which were forwarded in large quantities, on packhorses, twice a week to Bristol. The merchants, who lived in great style, and gave employment to many of the lower orders, who were principally engaged in lace making, and in the manufacture of serges, removed, and about the year 1750, the historian of Lyme\* says, "the town was in a deplorable condition." Scores of houses were empty, and fell into such decay, that it was unsafe to walk through the streets in a high wind. The population dwindled to 1,000. There was no wheeled vehicle of any description in the place. Large houses were sold for £70 or £80. No white bread was buyable in the town, and labourers worked for fourpence a day. It was this terrible depression in trade, with the interests of which the cause at Lyme has always been intimately associated, that delayed the building of the chapel, though it does not seem to have greatly reduced the congregation. Eventually the place was built, wholly under Mr. Whitty's direction, who, as tradition asserts, made the pulpit and front of the galleries, and adorned them with all their mouldings, with his own hands. Certainly the building does credit to his taste, for it is a noble specimen of an Old Meeting-house, of which any people might well be proud. On Nov. 23rd, 1755, the chapel was so far completed that it was used for service, when Mr. Whitty preached from Psalm cxxxii., 14, 15. A more formal "dedication" followed May, 1756, when the Rev. John Rutter, of Honiton, preached from Hebrew x., 25. Notwithstanding the depression in trade and the diminution of the population, the congregation continued to fill the chapel. And Mr. Whitty ministered with many tokens of the Divine blessing. He was remarkable for his modesty and his great aversion to popularity. For the thirty years of his pastorate he was seldom known to leave his charge. His gift in prayer is said to have been extraordinary, and his preaching, in which he was assisted by shorthand notes, was admirable if not brilliant. Between him and his people there continued to exist the warmest affection to the time of his death, in 1762. After his death four volumes of his sermons were printed; two in 1766, which met

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\* Roberts, Lyme Regis.

with such a favourable reception, that they were followed by two more in 1772.

In 1766, the Rev. Nicholas Pearson, who had been educated at Coward's Academy, and had previously been minister of Lymington, undertook the charge. Arianism was filling the pulpits and emptying most of the chapels in the West, so that it is perhaps hardly surprising that Mr. Pearson should have been suspected of leaning towards those opinions. Little, however, is known of him. He had, what in those days was considered a short pastorate, and removed to Southampton in 1774. It is doubtful whether he ever afterwards exercised the ministry.

The Rev. John Reed Harris came in 1775. Educated under Mr. Rooker, at Bridport, he was not even suspected of Arian tendencies. It came as a bolt from the blue to both ministers and people, when, having accepted the call and entered on the work, he, at his ordination, declared himself to be a decided Arian. This led to a division. The Arians and Socinians remained Mr. Harris's hearers, and the Evangelical party walked over to Charmouth to worship. Mr. Harris was much respected and beloved, and seems to have been an estimable man, his behaviour, previous to his ordination, being in direct contrast to his generally excellent conduct. He left in 1798 to become minister of the Socinian church at Ilminster, where he died 23rd January, 1800.

At his departure the congregation was small and did not at once proceed to invite another minister. The pulpit was supplied by neighbouring Independent ministers. And it would seem also that a Rev. William Warner, educated at Coward's College, was here for a short time, and removed to Nailsworth.

On May 1st, 1800, the Rev. James Wheaton, who had received his education at Taunton and Axminster, and who had frequently occupied the pulpit during the time he was studying with Mr. Small, at Axminster, was ordained pastor. In 1803 a great fire burnt all the houses in Mill Green, and all those immediately surrounding the chapel; but the latter happily escaped. Of the excellence of Mr. Wheaton's character it would be difficult to say too much. He was amiable in spirit, faithful in friendship, and

holy in conversation. The claims of his Master seemed ever present to his mind, and he was dilligent in his visits to the sick and poor, in which his wife, who long survived him, helped him greatly. In preaching he avoided the discussion of undefying questions and was always impressive and acceptable. Under such a man, and with the peculiar opportunities that existed then, when places of worship were fewer, trade reviving, and the population increasing (in 1800 it was 1535; in 1810, 1925; in 1823, 2261), the congregation greatly increased. "Some say that at that period it was one of the most respectable in Dorset." Mr. Wheaton was a contributor to the Theological Magazine, where some accounts of his work may yet be read, and in 1817 he published the first part of a Sunday School Catechism, the second part being published after his death, which took place March 1st, 1818.

In the summer of the same year the Rev. John Gleed, of Teignmouth, accepted a call to the pastorate. For a time all went well; but after two or three years the church fell to pieces, many of the members going off to the Baptist Church. The church was re-formed May 16th, 1821. In 1822 the present vestry, or schoolroom, was built; but things do not seem to have been much better. Impelled by the wants of a large family, the minister attempted to add to his small income by commencing business in the coal and fossil trades. This only made matters worse. Wounded pride made the people jealous, and they considered that his business interfered with his ministerial usefulness. He appears to have been an amiable, good-natured man of moderate ability. In November, 1824, a great storm passed over Lyme, destroying the Cobb and many houses and stores. Among the latter were Mr. Gleed's coal stores. During the remaining years of his stay his career was, in consequence, one of continued financial difficulty. At length he failed in business, and removed to Seaton (1828), after an unsatisfactory ministry of ten years. He shortly afterwards went to Canada, where he became a settled and prosperous minister.

The troubles of the church did not end with Mr. Gleed's removal. In May, 1828, the Rev. Ebenezer Smith, from Mar-

tock, succeeded him. During his time gas was introduced into the chapel, and an organ purchased for £120. In consequence, however, of an unfortunate misunderstanding between the minister and people, the congregation dwindled to almost nothing, and some expected the entire extinction of the cause. Mr. Smith removed in 1838 to Milborne Port, Somerset, where, after four years' ministry, marked by the same want of success as at Lyme, he conformed to the Established Church.

In 1839, the Rev. George Jones, of Homerton College, had the courage to accept the pastorate in March, and was ordained in August, at the same time that the Dorset Association held its meetings in Lyme. It is refreshing to read, after the squabbles of the past, that long before the commencement of the Ordination Service, the chapel and vestry were so crowded that large numbers were unable to get in. Dr. Pye Smith delivered the charge, and it is gratefully recorded in the minutes that he would receive nothing for his travelling expenses, which amounted to over £7 (travelling was no joke in those days). The collection amounted to £23. About this time £80 was spent in repairing the chapel, plastering the outside, and registering the building for marriages.

The next year there was trouble again. In that year Mr. John Avery died, leaving four acres of land at Uplyme for the benefit of the minister for the time being. Mr. Smith, the late minister, was one of his executors, and insisted on being paid some money alleged to be due to him before handing over the land. Eventually the matter was referred to the arbitration of Mr. Chandler, of Sherborne, and a lawsuit avoided.

There is a curious little grave-yard on the Lynch, belonging to the church. It came into its possession thus: In 1841 two cottages and a garden, of which the present grave-yard then formed part, was bought at a sale by auction by Mr. T. B. Goddard, a deacon and a good friend of the cause. His idea was that by means of the rents, burial fees and subscriptions, the church might gradually repay him the cost—something over £250—the whole of which he provided, and thus have a burial-ground and an addition to the endowment. But subscriptions



did not come in, and at length, having abandoned all hope of ever being able to find the money, the church on July 11th, 1873, set Mr. Goddard free to dispose of the cottages as he saw fit, leaving them the grave-yard.

The seats in the chapel were lowered eight inches in 1843, and the interior repainted, at Mr. Goddard's cost.

Mr. Jones resigned through a failure of voice, March 10th, 1844, to the great regret of the people. He was a good, earnest, useful man, and a popular preacher. He removed to Portsmouth, where he died in 1848, aged 36.

The Rev. F. Rice settled in October, 1844, and died of brain fever, 18th November.

Of the Rev. Philip James, who succeeded him, it is recorded that he "was a popular preacher and succeeded in raising a large Sunday School, but his ministry, as a whole, brought disaster to the church, and left a heritage of division and weakness it has never recovered." He left October, 1846.

In 1847 the Rev. Frederick Newman, of Berkeley, became minister, but as the congregation continued to decline, not through any fault of his, but because declining trade caused many removals, and impoverished and discouraged pastor and people alike. He removed to Herne Bay in 1852, and thence to Manningtree, Essex.

The Rev. Benjamin Hudson, of Spring Hill College, came next in 1852, but within three months of his settlement, developed cerebral disease, which obliged him to leave.

The Rev. S. Knell, from Abbotsbury, took his place in November. The continued exodus of the people, owing to the closing of some of the remaining manufactories, obliged him to eke out his living by keeping a school, which the people resented as a reflection on them, so he removed to Throop, Hants, 1856, and died in Birmingham in 1885.

From January to October, 1857, the Rev. W. Byrne, from Ross, supplied the pulpit, when the chapel was closed, and remained closed until July 22nd, 1858.

It was then re-opened under the auspices of the Home Missionary Society. From that to the present time this relation



ship has continued, and annual grants of from £40 to £50 a year have been made towards the support of the ministry.

Under the new arrangement the Rev. James Williams was moved here from North Tawton, but "the air of Lyme being too bracing for his constitution," he returned to Tawton, where he died, November 7th, 1859.

The church was once more re-organized in December, 1859, with twenty-four members. A disagreement with the Home Missionary Society, about the settlement of a minister, led to another secession in 1860.

The Rev. Ebenezer Ault, son of the Rev. H. Ault, of Kilsby, from the Academy at Cotton End, settled in 1860. The work was so discouraging at this time, that the Society decided that "they could not afford to spend so much money on the place," and Mr. Ault left in 1865.

Another expedient was now tried, and Lyme and Charmouth became united under one pastor, who had an evangelist to assist him. The Rev. W. Axford was pastor of the united churches from 1865 to 1866. This short-lived union, which has not left an attractive memory behind it, came to an end in the latter year, when Mr. Axford became pastor of Lyme only, removing to Manchester in 1868. He was succeeded by the Rev. T. Just, who came from Charmouth in 1868. Two years later Mr. Just removed to Kelvedon. He died in Glasgow, December 11th, 1874. In his time the exterior of the chapel was renovated and the Trust Deed renewed.

The Rev. Paul Rutter, from Cotton End Academy, settled in 1870, and after giving promise of becoming a useful minister, died of typhoid fever, 1872. His successor was the Rev. J. R. F. Ross, of Colyton, who removed to Bere Regis in 1874. In 1874 the Rev. W. R. Waugh, of Spilsby, Lincolnshire, accepted the charge and laboured with signs of greater success than some of his predecessors, until his removal to Portland in 1879, where he still lives retired. In 1880 the Rev. William Parkes settled and died under melancholy circumstances from blood-poisoning in 1884. He was followed in 1885 by the Rev. F. A.

Warmington, who laboured on under much discouragement until his retirement from active ministry in 1894.

For a few months the Rev. James Menzies, of Bridport, kindly acted as honorary pastor on behalf of the County Association, and the work has since been carried on under his superintendence, by the Rev. T. Woodman, who came to Lyme from Cheriton, Hants, in 1895. Mr. Woodman succeeded in getting the centre of the chapel re-seated at a cost of about £60, but resigned the pastorate in 1898. The church is at present without a pastor. The congregation has for many years been small and poor. The situation of the chapel, in a back street, greatly hinders the work.

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### LYTCHETT MINSTER.

This village lies on the high road about midway between Wareham and Poole. Though regular Nonconformist worship is of comparatively recent date, there were doubtless many who sympathised with the Parliament in the struggle for liberty, and with the heroic 2,000 who preferred a clear conscience to the retention of their livings. The district abounded in staunch advocates of religious and civil freedom. Sir Walter Erle, of Charborough Park, and the Trenchard family of Lytchett Matravers, took an active part in the civil war against Stuart despotism. In the adjoining parishes of Morden and Lytchett Matravers, the ministers, Edward Bennett and Thomas Rowe, M.A., were ejected, and so were the ministers in the neighbouring towns of Poole, Wimborne and Wareham, in each of which the Nonconformist party was strong. Thus the people of Lytchett Minster were compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses for New Testament truth and simplicity, and we may suppose that not a few in the parish shared the convictions of the sufferers for conscience sake. The house of James Madgwick, at Lytchett Minster, was licensed for Presbyterian worship, July, 1719. He was probably the brother of William Madgwick,

of Poole, by whom several of his children were baptized, but whether he officiated as minister we have no evidence to show. A building, belonging to the dwelling house of Elizabeth Gage, was certified for religious worship 3rd April, 1733, and the dwelling house of John Stanley 15th July, 1735, but we know not by whom the services were conducted. In the early part of the last century, certain parents at Lytchett, named Taylor, Reeves, and Gellar, had their children baptized by Mr. Madgwick, of Poole, and later on (1740-82) other parents named Brewer, H. and J. Coward, R. T. and A. Knapp, Reeks, Tailor, J. and H. Best, Smith, Glover and Cole, availed themselves of the services of Mr. Simon Reader, of Wareham. In the year 1769, the Rev. E. Ashburner, M.A., of Poole, came out to preach the gospel in the house of Ann Frankland, which was licensed 10th January, 1769, and continued to conduct a service on Monday evenings for 20 years. When the house previously in use was no longer available, Mr. Crue, a member of the Poole congregation, bought "Frankland's" farm, and erected a small building near the farm house, for dissenting worship, which was opened 1819. Here the Rev. T. Durant, of Poole, preached in the evening once a week, and friends from Poole took the Sunday services.

About this time a congregation met at Organford, in a building now converted into a cottage, Mr. Swaffield and others preaching on the Sunday, and the ministers of Wareham, Wimborne, and the Rev. Samuel Bulgin, of Poole, conducting a service in the week from time to time. It was deemed desirable for the two communities to unite, and a new Meeting-house was erected at Lytchett to accommodate both congregations. Mr. John Wilkins gave the site, and several poor men, unable to contribute money, gave a considerable portion of labour.\* The chapel was opened April 28th, 1824,<sup>†</sup> by sermons from Messrs. Bulgin, of Poole, and Waller, of Hazlemere, for the joint use of Independents and

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\* See Evangelical Magazine, 1824, p. 361.

† The trustees appointed were John Wilkins, jun., Jos. Fancy, Samuel Swaffield, Augustine Swaffield, Robert Dominey, H. French, jun., Geo. Brown, Geo. Reeks, H. Smith, jun., Nath. Bruncker, and Jos. Randall, probably all attendants and supporters of the chapel.

Baptists. The first minister of the united people was John Gunning, who laboured with earnestness for 11 years, but as no church had been formed, some communed with the church at Wareham, and others with the churches at Poole. Absalom Curtis, the son of a farmer at Kezworth, who was ruined by the fall of prices at the end of the great war, became minister for seven years, and Mr. Semper followed for three years. The church was organised June 23rd, 1845. Mr. Rowe, a Baptist, succeeded in 1849; the attendance increased, a vestry was added at a cost of £50, and a considerable plot of land adjoining the chapel premises was purchased in 1851 for £18 10s., on part of which a schoolroom was built at a cost of about £60. Loss of sight compelled Mr. Rowe to relinquish his charge in June, 1852, after a very happy and successful ministry of three years. The people earnestly requested Mr. Curtis to resume the oversight, and he laboured faithfully among them for a few years; he removed to a small farm at Lytchett Matravers, where he died.\* Henry Stroud, who had been an honoured minister at Bere Regis for many years, followed Mr. Curtis, and removed June, 1862. Mr. Samuel Swaffield, of Organford, who died April 4th, 1859, gave, in his last illness, the sum of £50 towards the building of a Manse; this started a fund, and shortly afterwards the house was commenced. W. W. Sherren, previously master of a British School at Dorchester, became pastor in October, 1862, and removed to Portland July, 1867. Mr. Sherren, full of resource and energy, completed the Manse, and collected the funds to meet the cost. He also had the care of Sturminster Marshall. Miss Sarah Feacy, of Poole, who died in 1867, left a legacy of £19 10s. to the United Independent and Baptist Chapel at Lytchett, which sum was applied at the time to various alterations and improvements in the building. Daniel Hann, who had acted as an Evangelist at Bosham, in Sussex, for three years, followed

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\* The trustees appointed in 1851, for the plot of land, were John Rowe, Samuel Swaffield, Aug. Swaffield, Geo. Reeks, Cornelius Gould, Samuel Swaffield, jun., William Johnson, Robert Derryman, J. Conway, Havala Fancy, jun., H. Smith, B. Best, E. Anstey, W. Giles, and F. Dominey, who seem to have been the chief supporters at this period.



Mr. Sherren, in 1867. His eleven years ministry was much valued, especially by the young, many of whom were introduced to Christian fellowship by him. He had gathered around him an earnest band of helpers, and every branch of work prospered. He also entered warmly into the cause of total abstinence. But the soul was too active for the frail body, and, after much suffering, he passed to his rest December, 1878.

Edward C. Wall became pastor in 1879, and continued till February, 1882, when he returned to the vicinity of Tunbridge Wells, to resume work in which he had been previously engaged. Mr. Wall deplored the exodus of so many of his people from the district into the towns; the complaint is echoed far and wide, and from this state of things all the country churches in Dorset grievously suffer.

Charles Potter came 1882, and removed 1888.

Daniel Davis, previously at West Lulworth, and now at South Cheriton, Somerset, took temporary charge from 1889 to 1891. An attempt was made at this period to associate Broadstone with Lychett, but without effect. Alexander Macdonald, the present earnest pastor, settled in 1893. Cottage services are held at Organford and the Marsh. The deacons are A. M. Baker, H. R. Talbot, F. Bradford, and William Best.

Our friends have their difficulties in common with all country churches, but to inspire them with energy and hope, there is the Lord's gracious assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway."

D.

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## MAIDEN NEWTON.

This quiet little market town has the advantage of being a railway junction; formerly there existed a twine factory, but now the place is dependent almost entirely on agriculture and the railway. During the Commonwealth Maiden Newton enjoyed the privilege of Evangelical preaching. The return made to the Commissioners in 1650 states that Andrew Bromhall had been put in as minister by the Parliament. He was one of the



Triers<sup>†</sup> in the county for rejecting immoral and inefficient ministers. He took part in the "Cripplegate Morning Exercises" delivered in London, and a sermon of his in the collection, on the discovery and cure of hypocrisy, is described as "an excellent and useful discourse, which shows the author to have been a man of ability and learning." He is said to have died before the Restoration.\*

William Benn, ejected from All Saints', Dorchester, driven away by the Five Mile Act, resided here in 1669, and no doubt exercised his ministry in a quiet way.

At the time of the King's Indulgence in 1672, licenses were issued for houses in "Newton, Dorset." One at least of these we may regard as referring to this place. A Dissenting meeting-house existed here in 1703, for a grant was made to it of £5 by the Congregational Fund Board, Dec. 6th of that year. William Orchard was minister in 1715, but the place had disappeared in 1777. Hutchings speaks of it as situated "a little north of the parish."

The family of Dr. Andrew Reed, formerly the honoured minister of Wycliffe Congregational Chapel, London, and the founder of several asylums for orphans, idiots, &c., was associated with this place. From the first pages of the memoir of the Doctor, edited by his sons Andrew and Charles, we make the following extracts: "The Reeds of Maiden Newton have for many generations maintained an honest name among the yeomanry of Dorsetshire. They have had, indeed, distinguished men in their line; but pride of ancestry seems to have been most satisfied by the fact that in the most perilous times of the Stuarts, one John Reed, an officer of the Parliamentary army, held the good town and county of Poole against all comers for the Commonwealth of England."† A century after this date found the quiet occupants of the family homestead void of all ambition to trace their pedigree higher than this point. They were content to bear the name of men who for generations past

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\* See Calamy's Memorial, Vol. II., p. 142.

† "Covenant of the Mayor, Justices, Burgesses, natives and inhabitants of Poole to adhere, assist and maintain the present Governor, Lieut.-Col. Jno. Reed."—A Perfect Diurnal, No. 259, Ap. 16-23, 1649.

‡ See page 93.

had united to their love of liberty the grace of charity. Certain it is that John and Mary Reed were renowned for their godly lives, and that they made a path to shine after them in the virtues of their children, all of whom were distinguished for sobriety and industry in humble life. With the name they bore . . . they inherited the religious opinions of their forefathers, some of whom had known what it was to suffer for righteousness' sake; but, though sprung from the Independent stock, they evinced none of the bitterness of sectarian bigotry. So exemplary was their life, that the Rector of Maiden Newton used to declare 'he was surer of a welcome, and found more godly discourse, in the dwelling of these pious Nonconformists than in any other household of his parish.' By his testimony, 'though poor they were self-reliant, people of vigorous understanding, and living at peace with their neighbours.' Where their fathers had worshipped they loved to worship, not objecting to the services of the Church so long as they could hear the sound of the Gospel within her walls.

"That was a sad day for Maiden Newton when a proud and worldly priest stood up in the place of the faithful pastor; but, when it came, the Reeds were at no loss what to do. Rather than not hear the Gospel they took their family over the hill to the village of Sydling, to a Sunday morning cottage meeting. At night a few neighbours came to hear John Reed expound the Scriptures in his own dwelling, 'for,' said they, 'he is a born preacher. Thus it happened that as the sons grew up, the fourth Andrew by name (the father of Dr. A. Reed), was minded one day to visit Bridport.\* Finding in that town some kindred spirits, he joined their Christian fellowship, walking sixteen miles out and in every week, and accomplishing the journey with an earnestness and regularity which won respect even where it failed to secure approval. His example was not lost. Before long he was accompanied by his father and his five brothers, and in course of time a band of Newton villagers might be seen trooping over the dewy hills, and entering Bridport before the church bells had rung out for early prayers. Returning at night by the more

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\* The place was probably Cerne Abbas, not Bridport.

frequented road, they beguiled the way with earnest discourse, ever and anon waking up the echoes with the spirit-stirring sound of cheerful psalmody. Thus it was that 'the Newton Gospellers,' as they were called, gained a name in Bridport, at first for cant, but ultimately for sincerity, when it was seen how perseveringly they performed their Sabbath day's journeys.

But 'dark Dorset' abounded with hamlets far less privileged than Maiden Newton. There was not much spiritual teaching in the churches; of other provision there was none, and godliness was at a very low ebb among the rustics. Following the example of Whitefield and Wesley, then in the height of their popularity and persecutions, Andrew Reed and his brothers went out into the highways and hedges, reading the Scriptures on the village greens, or, as they had opportunity, gathering cottage meetings, as their parents had done before them. In course of time these efforts prepared the way for the visits of ministers from neighbouring towns, who preached periodically at these unprovided stations. On such occasions the young men of Maiden Newton constituted themselves a bodyguard for the appointed preacher, and by their presence and authority secured him, not unfrequently, from insult and molestation. The late Mr. John Clayton (then an assistant to Sir Harry Trelawney, called in derision the 'Cornish Baronet Saint'), who travelled these parts as an evangelist, related to one of his sons that, when he preached from a tombstone in the churchyard of Toller Porcorum, 'the six six-foot Reeds' stood around, and awed an unruly assemblage into respectful silence."

Andrew, the fourth son of John Reed, left in 1769, at the age of 21, for Weymouth, and eventually removed to London, where his son Andrew, afterwards so famous, was born Nov. 27th, 1787.

It may be added that the grandsons of the Andrew Reed mentioned in this account, and the sons of Dr. Reed, filled a high position in the Congregational body, Andrew having been minister of important charges at Norwich and St. Leonards, and Sir Charles being for some years chairman of the London School Board.

Thomas Denny, educated at the Hoxton Academy, was invited

by the County Association to become an itinerant preacher in the county, and a meeting was held at Dorchester, July, 1798, to welcome him, and solemnly set him apart for the office. He was appointed to labour in the vicinity of Maiden Newton, and at the association meetings held at Beaminster the September following he gave an account of his work; of the good order manifest in the various places, of opposition defeated, of providential openings for meetings, and of hopeful impressions produced. More than 800 persons weekly in the various villages attended his preaching, to many of whom the gospel had hitherto been a strange thing. He took up his abode with a farmer at Down Frome, who allowed him to preach in his barn on the Sabbath evening. Some young people were deeply impressed. A farmer at Cattistock offered his barn for services, and another farmer became a decided Dissenter with several of his family. Mrs. Porter took out a license for her house at Chilfrome, in which he held service. He preached also at Rampisham. In some places he met with little encouragement, but for the most part was gladly received. In one of the villages, when it was proposed to build a meeting-house, a poor bricklayer came forward and said that, though he could not give money, he would cheerfully give labour to the value of £5.

Mr. Denny, seeing that Maiden Newton was populous and central in situation, was anxious to provide a permanent place of worship, and this was secured in the gift of a barn by Mr. Henry Petty, woolstapler, of Evershot, which was forthwith fitted up, and opened for divine service October, 1798. The expense is said to have been borne chiefly by a lady, whose name does not transpire.

Mr. Denny left in 1802, about which time he married Miss Mary Porter, sister of Mr. B. C. Porter, of Sherborne. After filling various pastorates, including that of Mēre, Wilts, he came to Wareham in 1822, where he conducted a school, and preached as opportunity offered. In 1840 he returned to Maiden Newton, where his former labours were gratefully remembered and took charge of the church for six years. He died at Poole, 1858.

The Rev. James Cope, pastor of Waytown from 1815 to 1823,

seems also to have taken charge of Maiden Newton, and conducted the services each alternate Sunday.

William Rhead was appointed by the Home Missionary Society to labour in 1822 at Maiden Newton, but the following year he was removed to Rugely. Mr. Allen was here in 1827, and the County Association made a grant of £20 that his services might be continued, but his stay was evidently short. Thomas Curtis acted as minister 1833-5. For the most part the services previous to 1840 were conducted by lay brethren.

Henry Larter, who had previously laboured for twenty-seven years at Highworth in Wilts, received a call in 1847. He had much affliction in his family, and found it a difficult matter to provide things honest in the sight of all men. He was a devoted and hard-working servant of Jesus Christ. "His character and life were most exemplary, and secured the respect and confidence of all among whom he laboured. With lowly views of himself, he sought and obtained mercy, and enjoyed divine consolation in his last hours." \* He removed in 1853 to Langford, Oxon, where he died, 1862.

Mr. Larter's chief work was the erection of a new chapel in 1851; this he accomplished by earnest and persistent effort. Mrs. Petty, widow of Henry Petty of Evershot, gave an additional plot of land. The new structure was put up in a workmanlike manner, and was said to be the best piece of building in the town. The Weymouth Itinerant Society gave considerable assistance in the shape of counsel and money. Mr. W. Devenish offered to lend, for a time, free of interest, such sums as might be requisite for the completion of the building. Dr. Andrew Reed gave £10, and Mrs. Jennings (sister of Mr. H. Petty, and wife of Lord Ilchester's steward), £10. †

Thomas Meredith Williams became pastor from 1854 to 1857, and also took the oversight of the church at Sydling, as his predecessor had done.

J. Hardwick Smith, B.A., took charge in 1858, for three or

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\* Congregational Year Book, 1863, p. 235.

† The local trustees appointed were Geo. Whitty, dairyman (Cruxden); Walter Whittle, plumber; J. Chalker, watchmaker; H. Harris, farmer (Chilfrome); and J. Devenish, shoemaker.



four years, and worked in union with his father (Rev. J. T. Smith) at Sydling, and other villages. Mr. Smith afterwards carried on a flourishing Boarding School at Weymouth; the Rev. Norman H. Smith, M.A., bursar of Mansfield College, Oxford, is his son. The deacons at this time were Thomas Harris and Joseph Stickling.

George Rolph Miall, brother of Edward Miall, M.P. and editor of the "Nonconformist," became pastor in 1863. He also had charge of Rampisham. Sydling church had separated by mutual consent. Mr. Miall held a service weekly at Frampton, Cattistock, and Toller, and occasionally at Frome St. Quinton, Evershot, and Batcombe. He retired, from increasing infirmities, in 1881, and died at Sevenoaks, 1891. He was greatly respected by his people and all who knew him.

Since the departure of Mr. Miall, the pulpit has been supplied by lay friends, mostly from Dorchester and Bridport, and the Rev. J. McClune Uffen has now the superintendence. Mr. W. C. Bartlett did good service, as lay pastor, for some time. In 1866, the late Miss Scott of Sherborne (sister of Mrs. Henry Petty) gave a plot of ground, adjoining the chapel premises, for the erection of a schoolroom when required. In 1893 new trustees were appointed.\* In 1896 an organ was purchased, and a platform constructed, the whole cost of which has been defrayed; a Sale of Work toward these objects realizing £20. The present deacons are Messrs. Bartlett, Vine, and Trump. D.

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## MARNHULL.

Marnhull is at the present time one of the largest and one of the most prosperous villages in Dorset. Its prosperity is in great measure due to the introduction of the glove-making industry, which took place a few years ago, and for which the female part of the population have shown exceptional aptitude. Gloves, especially strong driving gloves, are sent from long distances to

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\* The local names are H. E. Chalker, C. Cox, E. Miles, D. D. Trump, Jos. Stickling, J. Vine, W. Bartlett, and James Crabb.

be made here, the greater part, however, coming from Messrs. Dent's factory at Worcester.

The Congregational Church at Marnhull owes its establishment to the missionary zeal of Mr. Stephen Harding. Born and brought up in the village, where he learnt the trade of a carpenter, he, like many others in every part of our county, was obliged in early manhood to leave his home in search of more profitable employment and greater opportunities. These he found in London, where he became a successful builder. In his prosperity he did not forget the village from which he sprung, and, knowing its spiritual condition, he was anxious that something more should be done than was then being attempted to bring the gospel to the inhabitants. On one of his visits to his native place he called upon the Rev. A. Bisenti, of Stalbridge, and suggested that he might commence a service at Marnhull, and at the same time made arrangements for an old loft (now converted into cottages), opposite the present post office, to be at his disposal for the purpose. Here Mr. Bisenti commenced a service, coming himself on Sunday afternoons, and occasionally in the evening, and being assisted by Mr. Cox, who kept a school in Gold-street, Stalbridge. On the wall of the building there is still traceable the almost obliterated inscription, "Independent Chapel, 1849," which is supposed to be the year when the services were first held. This loft was furnished by Mr. James Moore, of Hinton St. Mary, of whose benefactions to the place we shall have to speak later, and Mr. Stephen Harris, and others. Mr. Moore is said to have brought a pulpit as part of the furniture, and, with that sort of humour which our fathers sometimes enjoyed, but which would hardly be tolerated now, to have chosen the text from which Mr. Bisenti should preach the first sermon, "Alas, master ! for it was borrowed." The services continued to be held in this loft for three or four years. Meanwhile Mr. Harding had been at work to provide a better and more permanent place of worship. His first step was to get a small plot of land from Mr. John Hatcher, of Bristol, which was conveyed to S. Harding, W. H. Harding, Samuel White, and seven others as trustees, July 26th, 1852. On this land the chapel was built. Of the cost Mr. Harding

provided £50, and the balance was raised by subscription.

The chapel was badly built, or faulty in construction, so that in a few years it was necessary to remove the roof, pull down part of the walls, and reconstruct the whole. This involved an outlay of £100, towards which Mr. Moore gave £50. So anxious was he that there should be no mistake that he secretly deposited the money with a friend in Marnhull, that it might be ready even if he should die before it was called for. The re-opening of the chapel was celebrated by a tea meeting. After tea Mr. Joseph Pitman, of Milborne Port,\* was asked to speak. He replied that there was yet a debt of £2 or £3 on the place. "I will give," said he, "one-half of the money; but I will not speak until the whole has been raised." The balance was at once forthcoming.

In 1872 the graveyard attached to the chapel was enlarged by the addition of a piece of ground given by Mr. James Hunt, of Bay Tree Cottage.

In 1874 Mr. James Moore, who had in addition to the gifts mentioned above given an organ to the chapel, settled the sum of £600, the income of which was to be paid to his wife for her life, and after her death the trustees were "to pay the interest towards the support of the minister for the time being . . . or of any evangelist employed in connection with the church or otherwise or such religious or educational purposes for the benefit of or in connection with the church or congregation as the trustees shall think fit." Mrs. Moore died 1892.

The last appointment of trustees was made Nov. 3rd, 1892, when the following were appointed: W. H. Harding, London; James White, Shaftesbury; Stephen Harris, Jno. E. I. White, Wm. Drew, Wm. Knight, Luke N. Gray, and Demos Trowbridge, all of Marnhull; James Moore, Todber; Thos. Tucker, and James Ridout, of Gillingham. Soon after this appointment was made the chapel was re-seated, and internally remodelled in such a way as to make it as bright, attractive and comfortable a chapel as anyone could desire. New lamps and a new porch, which greatly improved the appearance of the building, were added at

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\* See p. 103.

the same time. The re-opening services were held October, 1893. The total cost, £180, was raised by subscriptions and a bazaar. In 1895 the chapel was licensed for marriages.

The church which has its home in this chapel has never had a settled minister, nor been a branch of any other church. But it has been blessed with a succession of intelligent, devoted laymen, who have guided its counsels and served it faithfully. In the absence of the church book, which has unfortunately disappeared, it is impossible to give a particular account of the length of time during which those who have been responsible for the services have served the church. Moreover, where so many have given precious and ungrudging service, it seems almost invidious to mention but a few. The original services were, as stated above, conducted and continued for some time by the Rev. A. Bisenti, assisted by Mr. Cox and others. On Mr. Bisenti's relinquishing the work, it was carried on by the Rev. Thomas Greenaway, of Henstridge, and others. After his removal the pulpit was supplied for some years by friends connected with the church at Milborne Port, Mr. Joseph Pitman and Mr. John Maidment, being the most frequent supplies. They were succeeded by Mr. Dennis, of Shaftesbury, and Mr. James Keynes, son of the Rev. Richard Keynes, of Blandford. Mr. Keynes' labours were terminated by his removal to Australia. The responsibility next fell on Mr. Dennis and Mr. Leatherdale. Later Mr. Dennis and Mr. Thos. Tucker, then resident at Marnhull, assisted by other friends, provided for the services. Since Mr. Dennis' death Mr. Tucker and others have carried on the work.

In addition to the preaching services a Sunday School has been carried on for many years.

The story of this church is one of small beginnings, of steady progress, and of much real good done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## MORECOMBELAKE, FISHPOND AND MARSHALSHEY.

Old writers divide Dorset into three parts, the Paradise, the Desert, and the Stony-hills. The western end of the county, up to and including the vale of Beaminster, was the part which they called the Paradise, and it well deserved the name. It is a region of rich and varied beauty. In the days of the Commonwealth it had some claims to be regarded as a spiritual as well as a natural paradise. The pulpits of its parish churches were occupied by earnest, evangelical preachers—men of unblemished lives and saintly characters. The restoration of Charles II. in 1660 changed the whole aspect of affairs here as elsewhere. The rectors and vicars who had been removed from their offices during the Commonwealth period, from no matter what cause, whether because they had been obnoxious to the Government or because they had been judged men of scandalous lives, ignorant or incompetent, claimed, and in most cases successfully claimed, to return to their benefices, and to drive out those who had been put into their places, whom they called “intruders.” Two years later the Act of Uniformity swept out many more evangelical ministers from the parish churches. By the operation of these two causes, the incumbents of most of the parish churches in West Dorset were driven from their pulpits and their livings, to the great sorrow of their people. John Salway was ejected from Whitchurch Cannicorum, Bartholomew Westley\* from Catherstone, Mr. Kerridge, sen., from Wootton Fitzpaine, John Hardy from Simondsbury, John Brice from Marshwood, Isaac Clifford from Bettiscomb, Henry Parsons from Burstock, John Hodder from Hawkchurch, Henry Backaller from Chideock, John Pinney from Broadwindsor, besides several others mentioned elsewhere. As a testimony to the character of these men, the following may be read with interest: “Thomas Fuller (the historian) had been deprived . . . of his living of Broadwindsor. One, John Pinney, who belonged to a local family, had taken his place in

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\* See under Charmouth.



his benefice. When, on the restoration, Fuller came to resume possession, he heard Pinney preach, and was, it is said, so pleased with his ministrations and their acceptance by the parishioners, that he was unwilling to deprive them of such a man and withdrew his claims."<sup>\*</sup> This magnanimous treatment, which was as creditable to Fuller as to Pinney, did not save the latter from ejection, Edmund Sly taking his place.

In the towns lying on the edge of this district the ejected ministers ventured to continue their work in private houses, and to brave all the penalties of the law, and established congregations which have continued to this day. But from Beaminster to Axminster, and from Lyme Regis to Crewkerne—a thinly populated region covering some 200 square miles—there was for 150 years only one obscure Nonconformist place of worship or resident minister—the Rev. Joseph Paull, who was living at Blackdown in 1772.<sup>†</sup> If an object-lesson were desired of what Nonconformity has saved England from, it might be found in the moral and spiritual condition into which this part of Dorset had sunk at the beginning of this century. The people were ignorant, profligate, and brutalised. Most of them never entered such of the churches as were within their reach. Day schools were almost and Sunday schools were wholly unknown, and services in some of the churches were either discontinued or held only occasionally. The region had become a moral desert.

Into this region good men and women living on its borders often looked and longed to do something for the evangelization of its inhabitants. Efforts were made, as will be seen elsewhere,<sup>‡</sup> from various quarters. In 1830, Mrs. Robert Kennaway, a lady of means, a member, and Mr. William Burnand, linen manufacturer, deacon of the church at Charmouth, hearing of the splendid work done by the Home Missionary Society elsewhere, offered to provide a portion of the necessary cost if the Society would send a missionary to work at Morecombelake

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<sup>\*</sup> Diocesan Histories, Salisbury, p. 235.

<sup>†</sup> The established church erected in 1840 stands on the site of the old Meeting-house. Hutchins.

<sup>‡</sup> See pp. 62 and 127.

and neighbourhood. Just at that time a young man named James Hargreaves, a native of Blackburn, Lancashire, where he was born in 1800, had completed his education for the ministry at Airdale College. The extreme darkness and ignorance of the people for miles around Morecombelake was put before him, and he was invited to undertake the work of collecting congregations, establishing schools, and building chapels in the district. At the advice of his friend and pastor, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Fletcher, of Stepney, he consented to do so, and entered upon what proved to be his life work on December 31, 1830. Some men would have been daunted by the difficulties to be faced, others would have proved unequal to the physical endurance required. Not so Mr. Hargreaves. He proved to be the very man for the work. Singularly simple in character, his heart full of love for God and sympathy for men, free from the stiffness of manner that repels or the by-ends that hinder, there was written upon his strong, kindly face and his earnest self-denying life, "This one thing I do." He set to work at once—visited incessantly until he had made himself and his purpose known in every cottage and farmhouse in a rough district eight miles long by four or five broad. Hills had to be faced, bad roads tramped or ridden over, rain and storm encountered. The roadside or the cottage kitchen were his only chapels. But from Morecombelake, round about by Lambert's Castle, Marshalshey, Birdsmoregate, and the Vale of Marshwood, he fully preached to all who would hear the gospel of Christ. Nobody was too poor, too despised for him. The very gipsies by the roadside found in him a friend who taught their children to read, and spoke to them of the love of the great Father. And among them he had some of his earliest converts. "In visiting 300 families . . . I could only find seven Bibles and twenty Testaments. In one village, where I began a week-evening service, there was not a Bible except one just brought into the place by a young man who had returned from Dorchester gaol." In less than a year his first chapel—that at Morecombelake—was commenced and opened for service January 1st, 1832, when the Rev. B. Jeans, of Charmouth, preached. It was a very modest affair, built of rough stone, 36 feet long

by 20 feet broad. His purpose was to use the place for a chapel and school on Sundays, and a day school on other days. The cost was as modest as the place—including a cottage for the use of the mistress, and the school fittings—it did not exceed £150. A day school was at once commenced, and continued by Mr. Hargreaves and his successor until the labour and difficulty of collecting subscriptions, which had to be sought far beyond the bounds of our county, caused it to be closed in 1880. The chapel at Morecombelake was hardly opened when Mr. Hargreaves was building again, this time at Marshalshey, on the top of the hills, six miles away. There a rather better chapel was opened August, 1832, and no sooner opened than filled with a congregation that not only occupied the rough stools that took the place of seats, but even the pulpit steps. This, too, was used for a Sunday school. Five years later—years of incessant toil, in which the minister got to love his people and work more intensely than ever, and found his love reciprocated—another chapel was built in a place called Fishpond bottom, which lies under the shadow of the old Roman camp, Lambert's Castle, and where there had never been a place of worship or a school. This chapel was opened, after some vexatious and costly delays, August 8th, 1837, and soon had a good day and Sunday school, which, with the exception of a short time, have been maintained ever since. By this time, Mr. Hargreaves wrote of the chapel at Morecombelake: "The place is too strait for us; many remain outside for want of room." It was reopened after being enlarged by raising the walls and erecting an end gallery, September 9th, 1840. It was estimated to seat 340 persons, and notwithstanding gloomy weather and the absence of any public means of conveyance, the congregation crowded it in every part. A hundred and fifty people are said to have come from the churches at Sherborne, Axminster, Lyme, Charmouth, Beaminster, and Bridport. In the spring of this year, March 20th, Mrs. Hargreaves died, after a long and painful illness. Mr. Hargreaves was now preaching four times on Sunday, beginning at Fishpond at nine o'clock, besides five or six times in the week. He estimated his aggregate congregations at considerably over

1,000, with 370 children in the three Sunday schools, and 180 in day schools. On the day on which the Prince of Wales was married, March 10th, 1863, a new schoolroom was added to the chapel at Morecombelake.

Mr. Hargreaves was the father of his people. They were poor; apparently, from his account, poorer than they are now. Bread, in those days of protection for the agricultural interest, had become a luxury among the people who tilled the soil; many of them were driven to living largely on potatoes and horse beans, washed down with mint tea. A good many, especially about Morecombelake, lived as they do still, in their own mud houses which, though of little value, prevented them getting assistance from the rates. Mr. Hargreaves travelled the country far and near, wrote to the *Home Missionary Magazine*, and collected money to build chapels, maintain schools, and provide the people with such things as they absolutely needed. They looked up to him, trusted him, gathered around him, whether he preached in the chapels or in cottages in the scattered hamlets of his district. Many were converted to God by his ministry. Old people all over the district still tell the visitor that they owe all they are for time and eternity to Mr. Hargreaves. Gradually the character of the people changed under the influence of the Gospel. The minister laboured on, winning, as few have ever won, the love of his simple people and the esteem of all, of whatever persuasion, who knew him, until his death, which took place suddenly after his preaching to an unusually large congregation, Nov. 10th, 1869. He had wished to die in harness, and God gave him his heart's desire. It has fallen to the lot of few men to so completely find their true sphere, or to see their labour so abundantly blessed.

Soon after the death of Mr. Hargreaves the Home Missionary Society appealed to the Rev. Samuel Giblett, then of Alderton, Suffolk, to undertake the work at Morecombelake and district. This he consented to do, and commenced his labours in 1870. It would have been impossible to make better choice of a successor. Mr. Giblett brought to the work a large heart, sound practical wisdom, great sympathy with the poor and ignorant, and immense zeal for their welfare. For twenty-eight years he has



gone in and out among the people, preaching, teaching and visiting. He has been their councillor in all kinds of perplexities, their legal adviser, their doctor and surgeon, setting broken arms and legs as well as binding up broken hearts. He has been their example in industry, in the cultivation of the soil, and in the use of every kind of tool, for there is nothing a man can do with his hands that Mr. Giblett cannot do. He has successfully defended the poor against the oppression of the rich, and the weak against the strong. He has waged increasing war against intemperance. And the widow, the orphan, the sick and the poor have found in him their best friend. No man in the district is more trusted ; no man has a greater influence or uses it more disinterestedly or more beneficently, and no man is more honoured by his brethren in the county. This last was shown in 1893, when he was elected chairman of the Dorset Association of Congregational Churches for the ensuing year. He has been called upon to labour all these years against difficulties as great, probably greater, than those which attended the establishment of the mission. Then the ground was practically unoccupied ; but the Established Church has been stimulated into increased activity, new churches and schools have been erected or removed until a church has been placed alongside each of our chapels. The population has steadily diminished ; economic changes, the facility of locomotion, and the general drift of the people from the country into the towns have led to this. Old and generous friends have died or grown poorer, and the romance of the first attempts to enter on work in these wilds has faded. But notwithstanding it all Mr. Giblett has been wonderfully blessed, and aided by his devoted wife, has kept in touch by correspondence with those who have removed. The converts made in these years are now scattered over a large part of the world, doing good work for Christ in many churches and many lands, and all looking back to their old home in Dorset, and to Mr. and Mrs. Giblett, with undying affection. A volume could easily be filled with the records of this mission alone.

From an early period of his ministry Mr. Giblett, in addition to his own work, has superintended the work at Hawkchurch,



and in 1894 a local proof of the value set upon it was given by Mrs. Trott, of High View, Fishpond, who generously conveyed her freehold house there to trustees as a residence for the evangelist or minister working in the Hawkchurch district.

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## PARKSTONE.

This beautiful spot, though now forming part of the borough of Poole, is within the parish of Canford Magna ; it is sheltered from the east by a range of hills, and lies open to the south-west, with fine views of the Poole Estuary, and the Purbeck Hills beyond ; on account of its charming scenery and genial climate, it has been called "The English Mentone." A few years ago it consisted only of two or three farmhouses, with a few scattered cottages, now it contains a population of about 5,500, and is rapidly growing.

Among the licenses to hold nonconformist services granted by Quarter Sessions in the County of Dorset, we find the following : "Dwelling House of Thomas Knight, Parkstone, Presbys., 4th October, 1737." No doubt the services at this distant date were conducted by friends from Poole, but how long they were continued cannot be ascertained.

From a statement drawn up and signed by the Rev. T. Durant of Poole, and dated February 1st, 1839, we learn that 35 years before, or about 1804, several Christian friends, anxious for fields of labour, turned their attention to Parkstone, then an obscure and scattered hamlet. Messrs. J. Wadham, J. B. Brown, T. Coward, T. Butler, D. Bird, and J. Spurrier, started a Sunday school, which flourished. These brethren taught for several years, and then others took up the work. As many of the adults could not even read, and were entirely ignorant of the gospel, it was resolved to start a Sunday evening service. Thus far the teaching and preaching were carried on in a cottage rented of Mr. Guy.

Subsequently, a more suitable building was hired from the late

Mr. W. Green. Here the Sunday school numbered at one time as many as 90 scholars, and the services on the Sunday evenings, and once on a week-night, were conducted chiefly by Mr. Durant or his assistant ; the attendance was large, and many found light and peace.

Mr. George Gollop, to whom we are indebted for valuable information concerning Long Ham, Lytchett, and other places, says that his father regularly taught in the Sunday school at Parkstone during the whole of the year 1824 (as appears from his diary), and, he believes, for some four or five years at least previous to that period.

A larger building became a matter of necessity, and this was accomplished through the efforts of Mr. Durant, who was untiring in the endeavour to extend the gospel in the districts around Poole. A wealthy lady residing at Poole, Mrs. Bunn, the aunt of the late Mrs. Martin Kemp-Welch, handed over to Mr. Durant a sum sufficient to rear a House of God at Parkstone, and the work was commenced. The late Mr. George Gollop was both architect and builder ; under him Mr. David Tuck took the contract for the masonry (the late Mr. McWilliam, of Bournemouth, married Sarah, the daughter of Mr. Tuck), and the building was opened March 6th, 1839. The total cost, including the land, was about £1,000, which was defrayed by Mrs. Bunn, whose maiden name was Buckland, and the new building was called "Buckland Chapel," to commemorate her generosity.

Mr. Durant, in the statement previously mentioned, explains and justifies the course he took with reference to this splendid and timely donation, and concludes : "My affectionate wish and fervent prayer is, that the new place may be favoured with the divine blessing ; that the gospel in its purity and power may long be proclaimed within the walls ; that the spirit of humility, devotion, and peace may ever be cultivated by both preachers and hearers."

In 1864 a new arrangement was entered into by the Poole Church with the friends at Parkstone, it being felt that the latter place now required a minister who should be primarily connected

therewith. It was proposed that assistance should be given, not exceeding £50 a year, and that the congregation at Parkstone should raise at least another £50 for their minister. In consideration of the help thus rendered, it was stated that the minister to be appointed was expected to do pastoral work in Poole, to preach there on the evening of the first Sabbath in each month, and to render to the pastor of the church at Poole such general assistance as might be agreed on between them. The new arrangement came into force September 29th, 1864. John Fernie was chosen assistant minister at Poole in March, 1863, and left in September, 1864, in response to a request from the Colonial Missionary Society, to take the oversight of a church at Durban, Natal. He seems to have done most of the work at Parkstone, and was commended for earnestness and diligence during his brief stay.

John Lockwood, B.A., who was educated at Rotherham College, and had filled important pastorates at Tavistock Manchester, and Oswestry, came to Parkstone in 1865. He was a scholarly cultured man, of rich and ripe experience, and, though modest and retiring, had much spiritual power, and his ministry was greatly appreciated. Mr. Lockwood, after a few years' service at Parkstone, retired 1869 to Paignton, Devon. He came back some years later, and supplied the pulpit for some months. His last years were spent at Bideford, where he died 1888.

John George Tolley, educated at Hackney College, settled at Parkstone, 1869, and removed to Mansfield, 1875, where he still labours with honour and success. Mr. Tolley's sermons, rich in thought and chaste in diction, are still remembered with pleasure. About this time the schoolroom was erected, under the guidance of Mr. Hudson. No balance sheet was issued, but the cost is estimated at £250. A short time afterwards the porch was added to the chapel, and other alterations made, at an outlay of about £100. D. H. Richard, trained at Carmarthen, took charge of Parkstone in 1879, and resigned in 1881. Being in delicate health, he went out to Kimberley, in South Africa, where he died 1885, after a brief ministry altogether of nine years.

In the interval till 1886, Messrs. Johnson, Smith, and others, took temporary charge of the place. As Parkstone continued, to grow, the pecuniary assistance rendered by the Poole Church was diminished, and in 1884 amounted to £20 a year. In 1885, it was felt that the time had come for Parkstone to enter upon an independent existence. The Charity Commissioners gave their consent to a separation, and a new Trust Deed was prepared by them, dated October 6th, 1885.

The new Church was formed November 12th, 1885, under the presidency of the Rev. E. Evans, pastor of the church at Poole, the Rev. W. Jackson of Bournemouth assisting, and the number of members enrolled was 57. At the same time the following were chosen to fill the office of deacon:—John Sydney Hudson, Alfred Augustus Allen, Titus Buckley, Henry Hodges Hayman, Frederick Piper, and John Trumble.

William Plaskett Dothie, M.A., who was trained at Airedale College, and had filled pastorates elsewhere, commenced his ministry at Parkstone July 4th, 1886. As the place grew and the attendance increased, the need of additional accommodation was apparent, and frequent discussions took place as to how this could be best provided. There were difficulties in the way of enlarging the chapel, and it was finally decided to build on another site. Half-an-acre of land, in a central situation on the main road, was purchased from Lord Wimborne for £125; the services of Mr. Donkin, of Bournemouth, were secured as architect, and the contract for the work was taken by Mr. W. H. C. Curtis, of Poole, for the sum of £3,050.

The memorial stone was laid by T. J. Hankinson, Esq., of Bournemouth, Nov. 10th, 1892, and a large meeting was held in the evening, James Jackson, Esq., of "Danecourt," in the chair. Strenuous efforts were made by paster and people to raise the requisite funds. The new building was opened June 22nd, 1893. Dr. Newman Hall being unable to fulfill his promise to preach, through an accident, his place was filled by the Rev. A. Seys Howell, of Southampton, and the evening meeting was presided over by Sir George Williams, the well-known founder and president of the Young Men's Christian Association. The new



church is attractive, substantial, and capacious, worthy of fashionable Parkstone, and a credit to the denomination. The total cost has been £3,950.

The organ was repaired and enlarged by Mr. Alfred Oldknow, at a cost of £200.

Mr. Dothie, who had been unremitting in his efforts on behalf of the new building, and upon whom the debt had pressed heavily, resigned his charge February, 1897. Several names of valued and helpful friends in the past demand a brief notice. Mr. W. B. Coward, who died in 1875, was for some years an active superintendent of the Sunday School, and was always ready to further the best interests of the little cause which lay very near his heart.

Martin Kemp-Welch, Esq., who died in 1884, was the last of an honourable family long associated with the Poole Church.

The Rev. Walter Gill, pastor for a while at Welford, Northamptonshire, was compelled to retire from the ministry through failing health, and established a boarding school at Parkstone. Mr. and Mrs. Gill (daughter of Richard Keynes, of Blandford, whose name is fragrant still among the Dorset churches,) joined the church at Poole in 1855. They rendered valuable assistance to the Parkstone church, and their sterling worth and kindly sympathies won for them many friends. Mr. Gill died in 1893. The school is still successfully carried on by Mr. Ernest Gill. John Sidney Hudson, Esq., J.P., who passed to rest in 1896, was a man of genial temper and fine business capacity; he drew the plan for the new school-room, and was a wise, reliable, and generous friend of the place.

The Rev. James Sewell and Mrs. Sewell, who had spent their best years in the Indian mission field, resided during their last years at Parkstone; they readily gave all the support in their power to the church and its various activities. Mr. Sewell died in 1893, and one of the last acts of Mrs. Sewell, who recently passed away (Oct. 12th, 1897), was to give £120 towards the reduction of the debt.

Alfred A. Allen, Esq., clerk of the Poole Justices of the Peace, was a man of high character, and a valued helper in many ways;



he died suddenly in April, 1897, whilst conducting the week-night service.

An efficient day school has been carried on in the school-room for many years. The present deacons are Messrs. Titus Buckley, J. Lindsay, H. H. Hayman, A. J. Strudwicke, and J. Finlayson.

The Rev. James Wm. Coulton, from St. Columb, Cornwall, accepted in March, 1898, a very cordial invitation, and entered on this attractive sphere with bright and hopeful prospects.

D.

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### POOLE (SKINNER STREET).

To compress the story of the church in Poole into the comparatively short space allowable in this volume has been a specially difficult task. That story is so interesting; the men, both ministers and laymen, who have shaped it, have been so many and so remarkable; and the circumstances and constitution of the church have been so peculiar, that to do it justice would require a volume. Such a volume might easily be published. Already it has been written by Mr. W. Mate, of Bournemouth, who has had unique opportunities of collecting materials, and who has spent many years of a laborious life in getting together every scrap of information he could lay his hands on, bearing on the religious history of Poole. It only needs the printer's aid to give it to the world. The writer of this sketch has been favoured with the loan of Mr. Mate's manuscript, and from it many of the facts stated have been derived. Mr. Mate's account has been checked and supplemented by independent investigation, and some sources of information have been discovered that had either escaped his eye or were not open to him.

"Poole, one of the principal trading towns of this county, has for a long period enjoyed exempt and peculiar privileges, being an ancient borough and county in itself. . . . The boundaries of the ancient borough and county were co-extensive with those of the parish of St. James." With this statement Hutchins

begins his great work, *The History of Dorset*. This parish of St. James was for many generations a royal peculiar, and, as such, exempt from the jurisdiction of the Bishop's court, and the appointment of the minister was in the hands of the inhabitants, exercised by them through the Mayor and Corporation. The people thus taught from a very early date to manage their own affairs, both civil and ecclesiastical, with a freedom from external control unknown in any other part of Dorset, were trained to think for themselves and act upon their own convictions. They appear to have been apt scholars. Moreover, their occupations as merchants, manufacturers, and seamen, rather than cultivators of the soil, tended in this direction. They early threw off the superstitions of Rome, and, as the Rev. Thomas Hancock, who was appointed rector in 1546, and in after years had to flee to Geneva to escape the cruelties of Queen Mary, says they were "the first thatt in thatt parte of England were called Protestants." When Charles I. threatened the liberties of the people, Poole, as might have been expected, took sides with the Parliament, and became the headquarters of the Parliamentary party in Dorsetshire. "About the midst of August, 1642, information came to the Parliament that the good townes of Dorchester and Poole, in Dorsetshire, had bravely fortified themselves and mounted ordnance, and made strong trenches and defences." Though many attempts were made by the Royalists to obtain possession of so important a town they were always unsuccessful. In the same year that Poole was fortified as a Parliamentary garrison Josiah White, nephew of the Patriarch John White, of Dorchester, and some time chairman of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, became rector. Like other members of his family he had strong Presbyterian sympathies. From this time it is probable that Puritan and Nonconformist principles held a place in the minds of the inhabitants of Poole. Be this as it may, there were many Presbyterians and Independents in the town, as may be seen from a correspondence which passed in 1650 between the inhabitants, the mayor, and Colonel John Rede, the military governor. In that year the Rev. John Haddesley, who was a decided Presbyterian, and, after the passing

of the Act of Uniformity, became minister of the Dissenting Church in Salisbury, was removed from the rectory and imprisoned in the town by special order because he refused to preach on a thanksgiving-day ordered by Cromwell. The inhabitants believing that Colonel Rede designed to put Mr. Gardiner, a friend of his, into the rectory, petitioned the mayor to assert their rights. They say: "We, the inhabitants of this towne and members of Jesus Christ, haveing more than probable grounds that it is the designe of our military governour to impose Mr. Gardiner to be the pastor or teacher over us, and knowing that in the judgment both of the presbyterians and independents (the same agreeing with reason, right, justice and primitive practize), we togeather with you have a right to call or object against him that is to watch over vs," &c.

The mayor thereupon wrote to Colonel Rede saying that Mr. Gardiner's appointment would be opposed "to the uttmost of our power according to the desyre of the people." Colonel Rede replied in a dignified letter, dated Dec. 31st, 1650, disclaiming any such intention as had been supposed, and saying, "I declare if ever any minister be imposed upon you I shall have no hand in it." The people accordingly had their way, and Thomas Thackham was appointed rector. Nothing appears to be known about him. In all probability he was a Puritan—possibly a Presbyterian or an Independent. The fact that he remained rector of Poole until 1667, undisturbed by the Act of Uniformity, affords no presumption to the contrary as his successor, Samuel Hardy, was a Nonconformist, and in spite of his Nonconformity held the position until 1682. The place being a royal peculiar, outside the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the diocese, he was able to defy the ecclesiastical authorities, at least for a time.

During Mr. Thackham's incumbency great and far-reaching events happened, which are familiar to every reader of English history. Oliver Cromwell, described by J. R. Green as "the greatest King that ever sat on the English throne," died, and his son Richard, who succeeded him, resigned a position for which he had, unfortunately, neither taste nor natural qualifications. Charles was recalled from exile and restored to the throne in

1660. Before it was quite decided to recall the King a deputation, of whom the Rev. John Hardy, of Symondsbury, near Bridport, brother of Mr. Hardy, afterwards of Poole, was one, had waited upon Charles, and he had issued his famous declaration from Breda, in which occurs the passage: "Because the passion and uncharitableness of the times have produced several opinions in religion, by which men are engaged in parties and animosities against each other, which, when they shall hereafter unite in a freedom of conversation will be composed or better understood, we do declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that *no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion* which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom." In the belief that this declaration was sincere and would be acted upon, the Nonconformists had joined with the Episcopalians in bringing Charles back. He was, however, scarcely seated on the throne when, in 1661, an Act of Parliament was passed known as the Corporation Act, to which Charles of course gave his assent. This Act required every mayor, alderman, and other official of a corporate town to declare "that it is not lawful *upon any pretence whatever* to take up arms against the King;" to abjure the solemn league and covenant; and that none should be henceforth elected to such offices except such as should have, within one year, taken the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the rites of the Church of England. The effects of this Act were immediately felt at Poole. The mayor, the water bailiff, the recorder, and seventeen other members of the corporation were ejected from their offices. Many of them were well-known Nonconformists, of whom William Minty was one. (The whole list may be seen in Sydenham's "History of Poole.")

In the following year the Act of Uniformity was passed, and also assented to by Charles II. in direct defiance of his declaration from Breda. (For the provisions of the Act see Appendix). Among the 50 or 60 ministers ejected or silenced in Dorset was the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Vicar of Winterborne Whitechurch, near Blandford. We know so little of Mr. Thackham, the Rector of Poole, that we are unable to say in what particular



respects his ministry failed to meet the wants of some of the good people there. It is evident, however, that it did. For "about 1663," Calamy says, Mr. Wesley "was called by a number of serious persons at Poole to be their pastor, and in that relation he continued till the day of his death, administering all the ordinances as opportunity offered." That Wesley was a Congregationalist can hardly be doubted. He had been in youth a member of Mr. Janeway's "gathered church" at Melcombe, better known to us as Weymouth, and by that church he had been sent out to preach as soon as he left the University. He told the Bishop of Bristol, in an interview he had with him, of the Bishop's seeking, early in 1662, that he was not ashamed to confess himself a member of a gathered church, when the Bishop declared that there must be no such churches in England. Moreover the church at Poole, of whose separate existence this is the first notice, was unquestionably a Congregational church. John Wesley thus became the first minister of the Congregational church in Poole. It may not be out of place to give some further information about him. He was born about 1636, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bridport, and was the son of the Rev. Bartholomew Wesley, who was ousted from Charmouth in 1660, and ejected from Catherstone in 1662.\* He studied at New Inn Hall, Oxford, where he graduated. Returning to the neighbourhood of Weymouth, he was, as above stated, called to preach by the church of which he was a member. In 1657 or 1658, he went to preach at Winterborne Whitechurch, where the people were without a minister, and was induced to remain as Vicar, with the sanction of the Triers.† The living was small—about £30, but the Commissioners promised to increase it to £100, which, for some unexplained reason, they never did. He married a Miss White, daughter of the celebrated Rev. John White, of Dorchester: Three children were born to them while they were at Whitechurch. Their baptisms are thus entered in the register there. "Timothy, the son of John Wesley, vicar, was baptised April 17, 1659"; "Elizabeth, the daughter of John Wesley, vicar,

\* See p. 80.

† For information about the Triers, see p. 93.



Jan. 29, 1661"; "Samuel Wesley, the son of John Wesley, was baptised Dec. 17, 1662." He was a thorough Nonconformist, and never read the Prayer Book in the services. For this he got into trouble soon after the Restoration. One Sunday afternoon, in 1661, as he was leaving the church, he was arrested and lodged in Blandford Gaol. Brought before the Justices—Sir Gerard Napier and Mr. Tregonwell—he was committed for trial at the Dorchester assizes, and would have lain in prison until the assizes came round, but that Sir G. Napier meeting with an accident, by which he broke his collar-bone, was not easy about the young minister, and asked a friend of his to go bail for his appearance, saying that if he did not do so, he must become bail for him himself. The trial ended in an adjournment. But before the next hearing, the Act of Uniformity had come, and Wesley had ceased to be the Vicar of Whitechurch. He was not able, however, to leave the parish, on account of the delicate state of his wife's health. In December, she gave birth to a son—Samuel—afterwards Vicar of Epworth, and father of the famous and saintly John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism. As soon as his wife was able to be removed, he went to live at Preston, a little village near Weymouth. From this place he went on preaching excursions that anticipated on a small scale the itinerating of his famous grandson and namesake. Poole became one of his preaching-places, and, as far as we know, the earliest and principal of them. But he went as far as Yeovil, Bridgwater, and Taunton, spending nights and holding services in many a village by the way. Some of the ejected ministers, such as the Rev. F. Bampffield, Rev. Thomas Hallet, advised open defiance of law and the holding of public services with open doors, for which they soon got into trouble. Mr. Wesley was more cautious, and held his services as privately and unostentatiously as possible. He was watched, however. "Notwithstanding all his prudence in managing his meetings, he was often disturbed, several times apprehended, and four times imprisoned; once at Poole for half a year, and once at Dorchester for three months; but the

other confinements were shorter.'\* How he supported his family is a mystery, for he was very poor. Worn out by his labours privations and sufferings, he died 1670, and was buried, as is supposed, in the churchyard at Preston, but as of a greater prophet, it may be said, "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

But we must return to Poole. In 1667, three years before Mr. Wesley's death deprived the Independent Church of its minister, the Rev. Samuel Hardy was appointed rector of Poole. He was just Wesley's own age, having been born at Frampton, near Dorchester, in 1636, and was still a young man. Whether the two ever met at Oxford is unknown, but they must have met in Poole. Hardy, like Wesley, had been brought up a Nonconformist. He was dismissed his college—Wadham—because he would not take the oaths usual on taking the M.A. degree. But he had been more fortunate than Wesley. On leaving Oxford he had been invited to Charminster, near his native place, which was "a peculiar belonging to the family of the Trenchards, and out of any episcopal inspection or jurisdiction. The minister there was a kind of chaplain to that family, but neither parson nor vicar, nor did he take any institution or induction."\* Here the Act of Uniformity was powerless to hurt him, and he remained four years after the passing of the Act, "protected from the Bishop's courts by its being a peculiar, and from the justices by the favour of the Trenchards and a little conformity in reading the Scripture sentences, the creed, the commandments, lessons, prayer for the King, &c." Here he won universal respect, and was made spiritually useful to the young men of the Trenchard family, and to some noblemen and gentlemen he met at their house. "When Mr. Hardy had lived at Charminster a considerable time, the inhabitants of Poole," probably at the suggestion of Sir John Trenchard, afterwards Secretary of State, "invited him to that living. He accepted it, and preached, and prayed, and conversed in the same manner as he had done before." Here, the sturdy Presbyterian who would not wear the surplice, nor make the sign of the cross in baptism

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\* Calamy.

nor read more of the Prayer Book than he approved, remained until 1682. Interference in politics produced a catastrophe. A Member of Parliament having to be elected for the borough, the then Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Shaftesbury, was very anxious that his son should be returned. Owing, as he thought, to Mr. Hardy's influence, his son was defeated, and Mr. Trenchard was elected. The rector's popularity, too, was most offensive to the royalist and episcopal party, both in and out of Poole. Accordingly, in 1681, the Grand Jury, at the Dorset Assizes, made a presentment requesting one of the judges to inform the King that there were in the town and county a

"Great number of the towns men all knowne to be ob[stynatt] opposers of His Majesty's Government, influenced by the [seditious] preaching of one Samuel Hardy, an hired Non-conformist preacher, who, for att least twelve yeares last past, hath made use of the church of ye said towne, as a conventicle, readeing little or none of ye litturgie of ye Church of England; to whome multitudes of his majesty's disaffected subjects within this county doe constantly resort, the priviledges of the said towne exempting the said Hardy and them from punishment."

"At the same time, too, a complaint was made to the King by Allen Skutt, and other inhabitants of Poole," on the same subject. A commission was, in consequence, appointed, and the commissioners visited Poole. The inquiry was to have been opened with a service and sermon. The service, however, was more than enough for the commissioners. Instead of the stately liturgy, "the clerk set a psalm, and Mr. Hardy went into the pulpit without using the Common Prayer." They at once decided, and reported against him, and he was ejected from the living and driven out of the town by an order dated August 3rd, 1682. "He took a great delight in doing good, and, whilst at Poole, collected the large sum of £500 for the purpose of redeeming captives from slavery. He preached at Badsley for two years after leaving Poole, but was so persecuted for his nonconformity that he ceased to preach. He died at Newbury, Berks, March 6th, 1691, aged 54."\*

Some have thought that on Mr. Wesley's death the Independents did not think it needful to keep up their separate

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\* Calamy.

organization when such a man as Mr. Hardy preached in the parish church. But that can hardly have been the case. Two years after Mr. Wesley died, Charles II. issued his famous Indulgence—March, 1672—and there commenced three years of comparative liberty to Dissenters. In June of that year William Minty, who was carrying on a considerable business as a mercer in the town, took out a license to be an Independent teacher or minister “in the malthouse of Mr. Aire, in Poole.”\* How long he continued in that office cannot now be ascertained. Persecution, which broke out again in 1675, and continued almost up to the Revolution in 1688, made it good policy for the Dissenters to be as little in evidence as possible. But Mr. Minty, we know, survived the Revolution, and was an honoured citizen, and senior member of the Church when Hill Street chapel or meeting-house was built in 1704, and would, it is thought, but for his great age (he must have been nearly 80) have been appointed one of the trustees.

That there was a Congregational Church, in Poole, before, and up to the time that that chapel was built, is evidenced by two facts. The first is this: the minutes of the Society called “The Congregational Fund Board,” which was founded for the purpose of helping poor churches and ministers, and which held its first meeting December 3rd, 1695, show that at that same meeting a grant was made of “£5 to the people of the congregation in Poole.” The grant was £10 in 1696, and again in 1697. On May 9th, 1698, it was “ordered that there be allowed to Poole, in Dorsetshire, provided that they continue to allow at least £20 besides to their pastor, £10.” This grant was paid each year up to and including 1704, possibly longer but of that there is now no evidence, as the minute-books from 1704 to 1738 have unfortunately been lost. In 1698 there appears to have been a change of minister. The old one, to whom £30 had been paid, had apparently left, and the managers of the Fund resolved, “That Mr. Lobb (the Rev. Stephen Lobb, of Fetter lane, London), advise Mr. King (a student) to go down to Poole.” Here is evidence of a church and ministry long since

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\* State Papers Dom 1672.



forgotten. The other fact referred to is that there still exists a list of 55 persons, many of whom were members of the church before the date of Mr. Madgwick's ordination.

Putting all the indications, mentioned above, together, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the church of which Mr. Wesley became the first pastor in 1663 continued all through the ministry of the Presbyterian rector, Mr. Hardy—perhaps directly or indirectly shielded by him—and right on through the days of persecution, having ministers of whom we can only say, as Paul did, "Others my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life." If honoured Wm. Minty could only come back to us for a little while, what a flood of light he could throw on the vicissitudes of the little handful of men and women, who believed with Mr. Wesley that "we have a plain, full, and sufficient rule for gospel worship in the New Testament," and tried to act upon their convictions.

The congregation would appear to have been small and poor—poor enough to need assistance, in order to pay £30 a year to their minister, and too poor to provide themselves with a suitable place of worship.

We may be pardoned if we here turn aside from our proper purpose to tell what little more is known about this good man. In the Appendix to "*Hutchins' History of Dorset*," amongst the list of tradesmen's tokens issued in the various towns of the county, there is one of "William Minty, mercer, of Poole, 1657." While, as above stated, he was ejected in 1661 from his burgesship in the Corporation for nonconformity, his name is set forth as an alderman in the charter which James II. offered the inhabitants in 1688, in the place of the various charters which had been unjustly seized by the Crown. It will be remembered that at this period James II., anxious to find a way of granting liberty to the Roman Catholics, and having found the Dissenters both more numerous and more powerful than he had been led to suppose, was attempting to bring them over to his side. With this end in view he issued a declaration for liberty of conscience, April 4th, 1687. The effect of this declaration was that Dissenters of all sorts were not only set at liberty, but admitted



to serve in all places of trust and profit, with a dispensation from taking the oaths. In pursuance of this policy of conciliation—which, however, came too late to have any effect—Mr. Minty's name and those of several other well known Dissenters, were inserted in the proposed charter above named.\*

In 1702, a dispute arose as to whether the right of nomination to the rectory of St. James' belonged to certain persons called feoffees or trustees, or to the Corporation, representing the parishioners. A law-suit, which dragged on for years, and much bitter feeling was the result. This dispute seems to have driven a good many Presbyterians, who had hitherto remained associated with the parish church, to leave and throw in their lot with the Congregationalists. At least, three of the feoffees are found in the list of members referred to above—Moses Durell, John Carter, and Thomas Young—and members of the families of three others. The congregation thus reinforced set about the long-delayed task of providing themselves with a chapel, and in 1704 built the original meeting-house, capable of seating 400 persons, in what had previously been called Hell Street, and now became Hill Street, which was known as the Presbyterian Meeting-house, though it was never Presbyterian in anything but the name.

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\* The other Dissenters included in the proposed charter were Timothy Bird, who was also to be an alderman (this man was the father of William and Timothy Bird, who early in the present century were sturdy Nonconformists); then other Nonconformists were to be burgesses, viz., Richard Buckman, who gave the land on which to build Hill Street meeting-house; John Hookey, John Lenthorn, Richard Sutton, Abraham Smith, and George Olive, were to be common councilmen. All these men were in after years trustees of the Hill Street meeting-house, and members of the church. When the disruption took place under the preaching of Samuel Philipps, in 1760, their descendants either went off with their old minister to the new place of worship in Lagland Street, or remained in Hill Street under the new pastorate. The Birds and the Youngs continued with the old cause, whilst George Kemp and George Olive were amongst the seceders. The Kemps became one of the most important families of the town, whilst a daughter of George Olive married a Mr. Aldridge, and from this union sprang the Aldridge families of Poole, Christchurch, Dorchester, Southampton, and Bournemouth. George Olive Aldridge, of Christchurch, was in his day one of the most important and influential members of the Congregational body in Hampshire, and must unquestionably be regarded as the founder of Richmond Hill Congregational Church, Bournemouth, having for a number of years, as a layman, conducted Divine service regularly every Sabbath in Bournemouth, at a time when the inhabitants, through the smallness of their numbers, could not afford to support a regular minister.—*Note by Mr. W. Mate.*

To the pastorate of the church, the Rev. Wm. Madgwick was called, probably early in the year, and ordained Oct. 11, 1704.

The Church book of Hill Street Meeting-house commences with the following Covenant, which was agreed to on the date of Mr. Madgwick's ordination.

"Seeing it hath pleased God to call us by His grace into fellowship with Himself, and with His son—Jesus Christ—through His Spirit, we do promise our hearty acceptance of the Lorð for our God. And in faith of His receiving us for His people, do give up ourselves to Him by solemn Covenant, to observe all His commands revealed in His Word, and to walk in all the holy ordinances of His worship all our days. And being persuaded by the light and power of His Spirit in His Word, that the disciples of Christ ought to join themselves together in the way and order of Church fellowship, we do give ourselves first to Jesus Christ as our King and Head: and to one another also, according to His appointment, engaging through His assistance to observe all those things which He hath commanded to the Church of the New Testament, to the uttermost of our light and knowledge therein, and according as God shall give us opportunity so to do. That we will walk in that holy subjection to our pastor (and other church officers when God shall favor us with them) which Christ commands us. That we will communicate of the gifts and graces which God bestoweth on us, to the edification of the body, and in love, without dissimulation, promote the good of the whole Church, that God may be glorified in us, the kingdom of Christ advanced, and our souls saved in the day of Christ."

Then follows a list of 55 persons who were members of the Church at that date. At the head of the page are the significant words, "Some were members before."<sup>\*</sup>

Mr. Madgwick is described as "a man of uncommon piety,

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\* These are the names:—William Minty, who was the senior member; then follow those of Robert Sutton, John Hookey, Abraham Smith, William Fook, Timothy Bird, George Olive, Richard Sutton, Thomas Young, John Rose, John Linthorn, trustees; Richard Buckman, who gave the site for the erection of the chapel; James Seager, Joseph Stacey, Henry Reeves, David Cheeseman, John Thomson, Elizer Littleton, John Buckland, Henry Tuck, David Durell, Richard Bassett, Mary Corn, Eliza Minty, Mary Beal, Christian Righthead, Joan Turner, Dorothy Bird, Eliza Hutchens, Alice Prius, Elizabeth Linthorn, Eleanor Young, Uriah Smith, Sarah Olive, Eliza Reeks, Magdalen Smith, Mary Smith, Sarah Rose, Margery Winsor, Mary Bright, Honor Lardner, Eleanor Foster, Francis Miller (readmitted), Jane Mudge, Elizabeth Christian, Mary Taverner, Mary Rowland, Elizabeth Holloway, Elizabeth Warland, Susanna Holmes, Elizabeth Bayley, Mary Durell, Catherine Smirke (admitted Jan. 5th, 1704), Mary Robins (admitted Jan. 4th, 1704), Perham Williams (Feb. 2nd, 1704), Elizabeth True (March 2nd, 1704), Catherine Button, Agnes Smith, Elizabeth Bennett, Mary Busell (May 4th, 1704), Mary Carter (March 1st, 1704). The list of church members is then continued year by year

and of singular excellence in his private as well as ministerial character.\* During his ministry the church prospered. In the fullest sense of the term, it was a powerful centre of religious life and influence in the town, and it was the spiritual home of a large number of the most influential inhabitants. Among these were to be found the Birds, Blanchards, Jolliffes, Linthorns, Owens, Pikes, Skutts, Smiths, Durells, Edwards', Fabians, Hennings, Strongs, Youngs, Titos, Wadhams,† and many others, all of whom brought their children to be baptized by Mr. Madgwick.‡ So successful was Mr. Madgwick's preaching, and so attractive the place of worship, that in 1721 it was found necessary to double the size of the building. Here the good man continued his work, preaching also occasionally at Swanage, Cerne, Morden, Wimborne and elsewhere, until his death, in March, 1734. "After his death, the inhabitants of Poole paid a very uncommon mark of respect to his memory, by shutting up their shops, and attending his body to the place of interment." §

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during Mr. Madgwick's ministry. The names as they stand previous to 1704 are deserving of special mention, from the fact, that most of them may be regarded as having been church members in the seventeenth century. Besides this the families of some of the persons named can be traced at the present time.

There is internal evidence in the Covenant of 1704 (1) that there was a cause in Poole previous to the erection of the Hill Street Meeting House, and (2) that the old church members were making a new start at the time they drew up and agreed on the new covenant, and (3) that they had not then any church officers, or if they had any up to that time, an entire new body was then to be appointed—to whom they would "walk in holy subjection."

It is also noticeable, remembering the history of the Church a half a century afterwards, that there is not the trace of a shread of Arianism in the document. The covenant distinctly proves that the members believed in the call, bound themselves, first to Jesus Christ as their king and head (*i.e.* the headship of Jesus Christ in his own Church), and also to Christian fellowship one with another. Further, these old covenanters bound themselves "to observe all things which Christ hath commanded in the New Testament to their uttermost light and knowledge," and further, they were in love, without dissimulation, to seek to promote the good of the whole Church, "that God may be glorified and the kingdom of Christ advanced," and their "own souls saved in the day of Christ."

The document is a model one in many respects. In most concise language it sets forth the great cardinal principals held at the present time by Congregationalists, as well as they themselves, in 1704, believed them; whilst from beginning to end the covenant demonstrates the fact that these sturdy old Nonconformists built their spiritual edifice on New Testament principles—Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone.—*Notes by Mr. W. Mate.*

\* Wilson's Dissenting Churches iii., 108. † Church Book.

‡ A complete register of Mr. Madgwick's baptisms is in Mr. Mate's possession.

§ Wilson's Dissenting Churches iii., 108.

In his latter years, Mr. Madgwick had, as assistant or co-pastor, the Rev. Matthew Towgood, son of the minister of the same name, who was ejected from the living of Semley in 1662, and uncle of the celebrated Arian divine, the Rev. Michaiah Towgood, of Exeter. He appears to have been a somewhat erratic man. He had originally settled at Colyton, where he continued the Seminary commenced by the Rev. John Short.\* Removing thence, he became minister of Wilton, which he left for Shepton Mallett in 1716, removing to Poole in 1729. On the death of Mr. Madgwick, Mr. Towgood succeeded him as pastor, a position he held until 1739. His ministry was the very opposite of that of his late colleague. Differences arose between him and some of the more influential members of the congregation, many of whom abstained from becoming members of the church, that they might qualify for municipal offices by occasionally receiving the Lord's Supper in the parish church, as required by the Corporation Act mentioned above. Mr. Towgood was hardly the man to compose differences. He may have been, probably was, in the right. It looks as if some who belonged to the congregation, and subscribed to its funds, were hardly adorning their profession in their lives; and as if he dealt with them roughly. The climax was reached in 1739, when he preached a sermon, of which the text was Prov. xxvi. 11, in which, remembering their previous collisions with him, they understood him to compare them to dogs. They were so enraged, that without waiting for the sanction of the church, which they possibly knew they had no chance of obtaining, they took matters into their own hands, and locked him out of the chapel. This ended his ministry in Hill Street, but not in Poole. He and his friends commenced another place of worship, known as the Little Presbyterian Meeting, in Carter's Lane, which had but a brief existence. He was now getting to be an old man, and eventually removed to Swanage, where it is to be hoped that he had a more congenial sphere, and a more peaceful time. It is, however, to be feared that this was not so, for Murch says,† on what authority does not appear, that he retired from the

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\* See under Lyme Regis.

† Western Churches.



ministry and commenced business in Poole as a brewer, "but his habits of early study and absence of thought, of which many amusing stories are related, rendered him unsuccessful in his new occupation." He was twice married. By his first marriage he had several children. One of his sons, Stephen, became a pronounced Arian, and assistant to his cousin, the Rev. Michaiah Towgood. Mr. Towgood appears to have survived his expulsion from the Hill Street Meeting-house for nearly 20 years. In the register of St. James', Poole, there is, among the burials, this entry: "June 24, 1757, Matthew Towgood."

As Mr. Towgood succeeded Mr. Madgwick, to whom he had been assistant, so on his ejection from Hill-street he was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas Rowe, son of Rev. Thomas Rowe, M.A., who had been ejected from Lychett Matravers, and afterwards founded the church at Wimborne. Of the details of his ministry nothing is known, except that he came as assistant to Mr. Towgood in 1735, and ceased to be minister in 1741.

In 1741 the Rev. Samuel Hayward became the minister. After being educated for the Independent ministry under Dr. Gordon he settled, for a very short time, first at Saffron Walden in 1739, and at Potter's Pury in 1740. In these pastorates he won for himself a great reputation as an earnest, evangelical preacher of unusual zeal and attractiveness, especially to the young people. His sermons, of which about a score were published, and his correspondence, some of which is given in Wilson,\* leave no doubt of his evangelical sentiments. He was "in person tall and slender, his voice soft, his pronunciation easy, and his deportment in the pulpit popular"—"a gentleman of eminent character and respectable learning."† Apparently and naturally anxious to guard against a recurrence of the misunderstanding that had brought Mr. Towgood's ministry to such an unpleasant end, Mr. Hayward called a church meeting Aug. 28th, 1741, when a covenant was entered into. Its vagueness is its principal characteristic. It is, however, evident that trouble had arisen, and was threatening to arise again, from differences of opinion

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\* Dissenting Churches.

† Sydenham's History of Poole.



on the question of baptism. Mr. Hayward wanted peace, that he might do God's work, and there was peace in his time.\* He removed in 1752 to become successor of the Rev. Roger Pickering, of Silver Street, Independent Chapel, London, and died July 23rd, 1757, aged 38, and was buried in Bunhill Fields.

The storm which Mr. Hayward feared, but which his popular gifts and attractive personality enabled him to stave off, burst in the time of his successor, the Rev. Samuel Philipps, who came in 1753. Mr. Philipps had the disadvantage of being neither so young nor so popular as his predecessor. The old difficulty about baptism had never been got quite rid of. It was apparently not a question of whether children or adults were the proper subjects of baptism, nor whether immersion or sprinkling was the proper mode; but whether persons who had never been baptised in the name of the Trinity should be admitted to church membership. In the second year of his ministry Mr. Philipps essayed to settle this difficulty by, not exactly a new church covenant, but by a sort of codicil or explanatory addition to the covenant of 1741. It was agreed to at a church meeting Oct. 30th, 1763. This explanation made one thing at least clear, that only those could be admitted where "there has been an application of water in your name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." This might have settled the controversy, and been notice to quit to those who objected to the terms of communion, if the church had had the usual authority of a Congregational Church; but it had not. From a very early period—from 1704 at least—the subscribers or "proprieters," as they were sometimes called, had powers as large, and indeed in some ways larger, than those of the church members. The subscribers on this occasion were not content with the decision of the Church. Arian opinions had found their way to Poole, as indeed they had by this time to every part of the West, and had been adopted by a good many of the trustees and subscribers, who were not church members for the reason above stated. These Arians chafed under

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\* The late Mrs. Yerbury, wife of Mr. B. Yerbury, of Poole, who left £50 to the Dorset Association and another legacy to Skinner Street, was a member of the Hayward family.

Mr. Philipps' preaching. They objected to his evangelical doctrine. But they were provoked by his manner of presenting the unwelcome opinions. From 1653 there was a long bitter wrangle ostensibly on the subject of baptism, but really between the Arians and the orthodox party. Meanwhile a blight fell upon the spiritual work of the church, and the membership dwindled down to sixty-one. In 1656 death removed four trustees who were favourable to the orthodox views, and gave advantage to the other side, which they tried to improve by giving Mr. Philipps six months' notice to vacate the pulpit. Failing in this, "after much indecorous altercation he was locked out of the pulpit,"\* as Mr. Towgood had been before him, Oct. 1759. As Mr. Philipps and his friends wisely decided not to drag the squabble into the law courts, although there could be no doubt about the theological position of the founders of the place, the building was secured to the Arian party, and the building subsequently erected on the site is now the Unitarian Chapel.

Among the people who withdrew with Mr. Philipps were the Linthorns, Kemps, Cowards, Durells, Ledgards, Millers, Gillinghams—families of position and influence in the town. Such an experience as these people had passed through could hardly fail to raise some amount of bitterness in their hearts towards those who had seized the chapel and ejected them from the place in which they and their fathers had been wont to worship. But the most painful thing was the division brought into many families.

The ejected minister (Poole has had an unusual number of ejected ministers) and his friends proceeded at once to create for themselves a new place of worship. For this purpose they bought (1760) a building in Lag Lane—on the site of which the British School now stands—and fitted it up at a cost of £374 7s. 7d.,† and solicited sympathy and contributions from the public. The congregation here at first numbered two hundred. And the new church, or the old church in new premises, as they would probably, and with much reason, have called themselves retained two signs of their continued existence. They recorded their transactions in the minute book that had been in use for

\* Murch's Western Churches.

† See bill, which is still in existence.

many years, and they used at the Lord's Supper the silver cups presented to the church by Mrs. Joan Green, in 1722. With these things they continued also the peculiar constitution which had governed them in their old home, and which was characteristic of the so-called Presbyterian Churches in many parts of England. The document in which this constitution is set forth is so curious, and at the same time so clear, that we give it entire.

Poole, February 20th, 1760.

A paper recommended to be endorsed on the back of the covenanting deed, and to be signed by the Proprietors in trust. [This seems never to have been done. The paper is in the safe in Skinner Street Chapel.]

Whereas, the reason why it is necessary to build a new meeting-house this year, 1760, in Lag Lane, Poole, is because about *ten* contributors, with *ten* non-contributors, have, with unrighteous violence, seized and locked up our new meeting-house in Hill Street, and forcibly ejected our minister, the Rev. Mr. Philipps, and thereby unjustly and shamefully encroached on the rights of the majority of the contributors, and the bulk of the Church members and communicants; it is therefore agreed between us, the undersigned of this paper, to be binding to us, our assigns and successors :

- i. That we, the proprietors of the meeting-house to which these writings belong, are trustees also to secure this place of worship, as far as we can, for promoting a real Gospel interest in purity of faith, walk, worship, and discipline, and for advancing Christ's honour, after the manner of the Calvinian Reformed religion abroad, and to vindicate all the just and Scriptural rights of this church and congregation.
- ii. That the rights of all contributors be asserted (to be consulted, judge and act according to God's Word) in all things of common concern to the whole community.
- iii. That the liberty of the Communicants be secured in all transactions (peculiar to themselves as a Church) according to Christ's, their Congregational principles, and Church Covenant.
- iv. That no minister shall henceforth be forcibly ejected whose preaching of the Word and Gospel (as expounded by the Assembly's Catechism) is adapted to spiritual profit and edification, and who lives holily according to his doctrine.
- v. That when there is a vacancy of a minister, two-thirds of the Church members have a right to choose and call a Pastor and Overseer in the Lord, but not unless the majority of the contributors and the proprietors consent in choosing the same minister.

- vi. That any new trustee be hereafter chosen, as near as may be according to the method prescribed for choosing trustees in the writings of the Great Meeting House, but still without infringing the property of the late trustee, which, on his decease, descends to his executor, executrix, or heir at law.

There is an entry in the minute book showing a new kind of trouble. It runs:—"Poole, December 30th, 1763. Resolved unanimously by my self and the Brethren of our Church, at our Church Meeting this Evening, To Prevent manifest irreverent prophanness, That no Boys shall for ye future be Permitted to stay in ye Gallery, or in the Vestry, whilst the Lord's Supper is administered: but shall be Obligated, either to scatter themselves in seats below stairs amongst their Grave Friends or to Withdraw."

Mr. Philipps' ministry was not much more successful in Lag Lane than it had been in Hill Street. He seemed to have the gift of creating parties. Long before his ministry terminated, in 1766, there were two parties in the church; one desiring Mr. Philipps to remove and a younger man to take his place, and the other anxious to avoid any unseemly action, though not specially attached to him. He died in Chiswell Street, London, in 1775, in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

Among those who left Hill Street, and assisted in the erection of Lag Lane Meeting-house, was one who was a tower of strength in his own day, and whose descendants conferred unspeakable benefits on the Church—this was Mr. Martin Kemp, who was one of the deacons from 1760 until his death in 1772. At the risk of anticipating events we may here mention that one of his sons—Mr. George Kemp—was one of the most prominent figures, and one of the most influential men in Poole in his day, and died in 1845, at the age of 89, having held office as a deacon for sixty-four years. "Old George Kemp" ("Georgy," some people irreverently styled him) was familiarly known as "the aristocratic deacon." And his appearance in later years seems to have justified the title. He dressed in style. He wore "a black coat and small clothes, silk stockings, silver-buckled shoes, or Hessian boots, and his silver locks, which were covered by a shovel hat,



were tied pig-tail fashion and hung down his back as was the fashion of the last century." \* He was a man whose personality is still remembered by some of the older members of the congregation. Another son of Mr. Martin Kemp was also named Martin, and he, in 1795, at the request of his maternal uncle, George Welch, Esq., of the City of London, banker, took the name of Welch in addition to that of Kemp, † and he and his family were afterwards known as Kemp-Welch.‡

The real living history of the church commenced when the Rev. Edward Ashburner became the minister, very shortly after Mr. Philipps left. He was a comparatively young man (32), fresh from college. At college he had won the highest opinions of Dr. Conder and his other tutors, by his determination to more than make up, by present diligence, for a somewhat neglected early education, and by the aptitude he showed for theological and classical learning. He was short in stature and slender in physique, but his energy was unbounded. He had a living gospel to preach, and he preached it with a warmth of affection, with an intensity of earnestness, and with a plainness of speech that were exceedingly attractive. It was the period of the great Evangelical Revival. Whitfield and Wesley had quickened in the people of England an appetite for something better than the dry doctrinal preaching that had hitherto prevailed. And, although Wesley did not actually visit Poole (he seems to have taken no interest in homes and work of his ancestors), the influence of the great movement, of which he was the moving spirit, was felt there. And when Mr. Ashburner came with the earnest, rugged speech, which he never left behind him, the people flocked to hear him, and received the gospel joyfully. Within a year of his settlement, the Meeting-house was too small for the congregation. The building was made twelve feet longer in 1767. But still it was too small. In this year the University of Aberdeen conferred on Mr. Ashburner the degree of M.A. And in 1772, Mr. Edmund Williams bequeathed

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\* Mr. Mate's MS.

† "London Gazette," May 16th, 1795.

‡ His son, John Kemp-Welch, Esq., was for many years Treasurer of the London Missionary Society.



£200 to the church, the income of which was to be divided equally between the minister and the poor of the congregation.

When Mr. Ashburner had been in Poole ten years, the people determined to rise up and build a new and larger chapel. A site was purchased from a Mr. Skinner, in the street which bears his name, and Skinner Street Chapel was built, at a cost of £1,400, in 1777.\* This sum was made up of the price for which the old chapel was sold, and subscriptions amounting to £1,067. These subscriptions appear to have taken the form of sums paid for the right of having seats in the chapel when erected, and the subscribers were called "purchasers." In a document too lengthy to be given in full, dated 29th September, 1778, their rights are distinctly limited. No purchaser could have sittings unless he subscribed at least one shilling a quarter for each sitting towards the minister's income, and "no person shall at any time . . . put any banisters, linings, or anything that shall cover or be above the cappings of the seats."

In 1787, the first Sunday School in the town found its home at Skinner Street. The story of how this came about is as follows: One, John Clench, a native of Bere Regis, having removed for a time to Gloucester, there saw Robert Raikes' Sunday Schools. Returning to Dorset, he settled down at Hamworthy, and there started a little Sunday School on the model of those in Gloucester. There was at that time no place of worship in Hamworthy, and Mr. Clench, having the laudable desire of bringing up his young charges in the habit of attending public worship, determined to take them over by boat to Poole. The first time he did so he presented himself, with his fifteen or sixteen scholars, at the doors of St. James' Church, but was refused admission by the churchwardens. He next tried Skinner Street. Here he received a warm welcome, and the example of his zeal bore fruit in the establishment of a Sunday School, which has continued down to the present day, and is now, and has been for many years, one of the largest in the county.

Not content with ministering to the large congregation at home

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\* Licensed at Poole Quarter Sessions, Oct. 11th, 1777.

which included in its members most of the prominent people of the town, Mr. Ashburner's ardour for the gospel prompted him to make extensive itinerant excursions. Every Monday evening for twenty years he preached at Lychett Minster. Once a month he visited Lulworth. Once in six weeks he preached at Spettisbury, and occasionally at Corfe Mullen, Longham, Ripley, and Wimborne. Once a year he regularly visited London, and preached in the Tabernacle and Tottenham Court Road Chapel. He also visited his native place—Olney—and Bristol once a year, and always attracted large congregations in these places. Besides his services he gave away considerable sums of money. Possessed of ample means (he married in 1768 Frances Welch, daughter of the London banker above named), he was ever ready to help the needy and assist a good cause. Towards a new village chapel he gave £500, and is reported to have spent on charitable and religious purposes about £500 a year.

At the age of sixty-five his labours were arrested by a stroke of paralysis, from which he never wholly recovered. After the people had waited several months in the hope that he might be able to resume his duties, he resigned the charge. Subsequently he seemed to get better, and preached occasionally with something of his wonted vigour. But the end was not far off. He died in 1804, aged 69, universally beloved and lamented.

It ought to be mentioned that it was during Mr. Ashburner's pastorate, and possibly at his suggestion, that one of those many efforts was made which, although not conspicuously successful themselves, have helped to create the present admirable hymnology of the church. Mr. John Dobell, one of the deacons, prepared "a new selection of nearly 800 evangelical hymns, from more than 200 authors in England, Scotland, Ireland and America, including a great number of originals." This book was intended to supplement rather than supersede the use of Watts' hymns. It was sold for six shillings a copy, and passed through several editions, and was used in Skinner Street Chapel and in several other places of worship.

Very soon after Mr. Ashburner's resignation the committee decided (with his cordial approval) to invite the Rev. Thomas

Durant to become the pastor. The choice was eminently a wise one. During his pastorate of over forty years he proved himself to be all, and more than all, that the people could have expected him to be. It is no disparagement of Mr. Ashburner to say that Mr. Durant was in every way his equal, and in some ways his superior. He had all his predecessor's fervour without his roughness. He took hold of the work Mr. Ashburner had carried so far and carried it further. Nothing suffered by the change. Under his wise and practical guidance the church grew and flourished to an extent never dreamed of before. He came to Poole April 18th, took the pastoral care of the church May 30th, and was ordained to the ministry, September 8th, 1801. From the first his ministry was blessed by God. Among his earliest converts was one who was to win a world-wide reputation as a preacher, and to exert and influence for good by his writings that has not ceased to the present day. This was John Angell James, who was at that time a youth serving his apprenticeship to a draper in the town. It may be interesting to note that when young James came under the influence of the gospel he, like many another young man in similar circumstances, was shy, and did not venture to speak to the minister who had been the means of doing him good. "I greatly desired to converse with him, and have stood," said he, "at a corner of the street watching him to his lodgings, with a bursting heart, and longing to speak to him, but without courage to accomplish my wish." The spiritual help and guidance he needed, however, he found in the humble cottage of a pious old shoemaker named John Poole, whither he and others like-minded resorted, and where the light of heaven broke in upon his soul. In that cottage he first learned to pray in the presence of his fellows, and to confess Christ as his Saviour. Durant planted ; Poole watered ; God gave the increase. It is said that Mr. Fisher, of Blandford, was once on a journey and put up for the night at an inn kept by a Blandford man. Naturally enough the innkeeper began to inquire about the townspeople, and, among other things said, "there were two boys of the name of James, that went to school with me, what has

become of them?" "One of them,"\* was the reply, "has become an eminent Nonconformist minister." "Aye, which is that?" queried mine host. "John Angell," was the reply. "What! thik thickheaded vool; why he was fit for nothing but fighting!"† Evidently he gave little promise in his school days of the eminence he was to attain as minister of Carrs Lane Chapel, Birmingham.

Another of Mr. Durant's early converts was, if we mistake not, John Bristowe, afterwards minister of Castle Street (now Southernhay), Exeter, who died after thirty-eight years of ministerial service in 1832; and another young man, who came under his early influence, was John Wills, referred to at greater length under Bridport and Wareham.

It appears that when questions and cases of church discipline arose, as they not unfrequently did in a church the size of that at Poole, Mr. Durant felt the inconvenience of having to bring the details of some of them before the whole church, composed of people of all ages and of both sexes. To escape this inconvenience it was decided, December 1807, that such questions should be settled by a committee, consisting of the deacons and three members, elected for the purpose. It was, however, provided that where any person who had been dealt with felt that he had not received justice, there should be an appeal to the church. Judging from the minutes, this system worked well. There is abundant evidence in these minutes that Mr. Durant was of Wellington's opinion that "discipline must be maintained." There was no slackness—drunkenness, profaneness, immorality, inconsistency, especially the inconsistency of failing to pay twenty shillings in the pound, were visited with church censure, and, in the last resort, with excommunication—though the awful formalities used at Bridport seem to have been omitted.

Among other things in the minutes we note that in 1829 a letter was read from William Galton, in which he made confession that he had tried to create a split and build a new Meeting-house. On this sign of repentance he was re-admitted to fellowship. But

\* He might have said both, for Thomas James also became a well-known minister. His grandson—the Rev. Baldwin Brindley—is the honoured minister of Castle Gate, Nottingham.

† Biography of John Angell James, by R. W. Dale.



he seems to have fallen into the same course of conduct again, for in 1846 we read "William Galton, formerly a member of the church, applied for re-admission and was proposed." And in February, 1847, "seven persons were received into fellowship who had been members of the self-constituted church under William Galton."

Here is an interesting entry, showing that the "gifted brethren" were kept well in hand. It is under date 1831. "In order to prevent improper persons going into the villages and conducting the services of the village congregations, it is resolved, that no member of this church shall hereafter be suffered to officiate without first obtaining the consent of the minister and deacons," and further, "that no one without first consulting and obtaining the consent of the minister and deacons, shall preach or read his own composition, but shall read such discourses as they shall approve." This was no mere dead letter. Four years later we read "Mr. James Buckley having been regularly proposed at a meeting of ministers and deacons and having stood, according to rule, three months as a candidate, is this day authorised to go into the villages and *read* sermons and conduct village worship." This reminds one of good Mr. Gunn, of Christchurch, who prayed every Sunday that God would "bless the godly men that have gone into the villages to *read* sermons." These precautions were not conceived in any spirit of opposition or indifference to village work; but the very opposite. Village nonconformity never had a truer friend than Mr. Durant. In season and out of season he laboured for it, and as Secretary of the Dorset Association gave to it the best energies of many years of his life. Was a village chapel wanted, he was the first to be appealed to. Was a village minister in distress—was his stipend in arrear—Mr. Durant came to the rescue. Only the great day will reveal what the villages of Dorset owe to the labours of this honoured servant of God.

In 1811, and again in 1831, the graveyard was enlarged by the purchase of adjoining gardens. In 1814, a vestry, thirty feet long and eighteen feet wide, was built. In 1823 the chapel was enlarged at a cost of £2,000, and ten years later a handsome Colonnade Portico and new Infant School were added.



Early in Mr. Durant's ministry an effort was made to recommence a Baptist Church in Poole. He did not look favourably on the proposal at first, but, as might have been expected of a man of such strong, good sense, he soon got over any prejudice he might have had, and on the settlement of the Rev. S. Bulgin, the first minister, he took a prominent part in his ordination, and the two men became the fastest of friends. He also lived on the most friendly terms with the rector, the Rev. P. W. Jolliffe, M.A.

For the last fifteen years of his ministry Mr. Durant was assisted in his great and ever growing work by a colleague. This was made absolutely necessary by the development of the work at Parkstone, and the erection of a chapel there. Other ministers have had co-pastors or assistants associated with them, but surely scarcely ever had any minister such a remarkable succession of colleagues. The wonder is how he ever discovered them one after another. The first, and in many ways the most notable of them, was the Rev. Henry Rogers. He came in November, 1829, and resigned his co-pastorate and ministerial career, October, 1831. This was occasioned by his contracting a severe affection of the throat, through getting thoroughly soaked on a journey to Bristol. He was almost immediately appointed Professor of English Literature, in University College, London. He was afterwards Principal successively of Spring Hill College, Birmingham (now Mansfield College, Oxford), and Lancashire Independent College, Manchester. And he was one of the best known essayists of his generation, being a frequent contributor to the "Edinburgh Review," and author, among other books, of that remarkable work, "The Eclipse of Faith." He was a friend of Macaulay, Whateley, and many other of the great literary men of his time. His successor at Poole was the Rev. J. Morell Mackenzie, a young man of the brightest promise, who made a profound impression on all who came into contact with him. He came in July, 1832, was ordained April 10th, 1833, and removed in 1836. "On July 19th, 1843, he, together with forty-nine others, perished near Holy Island, in the burning of the Pegasus steamer bound from Leith to Hull." As Mr. Rogers did not

intend to continue the ministry, it was not necessary for him to leave Poole immediately on his resignation. He remained for a time and thus became acquainted with his successor, of him he writes in his *Life of John Howe*: "His talents were of the most varied and brilliant order, and his knowledge more accurate and extensive than I almost ever saw in any one man. His versatility was such, that it enabled him to master almost everything to which he chose to apply himself; and his prodigious memory, which I never saw equalled, except in the case of the late lamented Lord Macaulay, and not surpassed even in him, enabled him to retain all he acquired." The writer did not come into association with Professor Rogers for more than thirty years after he left Poole, but even then the spell of Mr. Mackenzie's genius and character was upon him. The third colleague was the Rev. Andrew Morton Brown, M.A. (afterwards D.D.), who was elected July, 1837, ordained "as my co-pastor," April 18th, 1838, and removed, December, 1842, to Cheltenham, where he had a long and most distinguished career. He was chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales for 1854. The last of this honourable succession was the Rev. F. Edgell Williams, B.A., brother of Dr. Williams, of Sherborne, who came to be Mr. Durant's assistant, February, 1843, and resigned with Mr. Durant in 1844. For a short time Mr. Durant was also assisted by the Rev. J. B. (better known as Dr.) Paton, founder, and for many years principal, of the Nottingham Institute.

Mr. Durant's domestic life was of the sweetest and happiest. He was twice married. First, about 1800, to Rebecca, daughter of Dr. Friend, of Newbury, who died in 1818, leaving him with an only son, whom he designed for the ministry. With this end in view he sent him to Glasgow to be educated under the famous Dr. Wardlaw, and there he died in 1821. In 1822 Mr. Durant married Mary, daughter of B. Chandler, Esq., of the Old Bank Sherborne.

His enormous labours in Poole, and throughout Dorset, so told on his health that he was compelled to resign his charge, April 29th, 1844. He did not, however, leave the town, but

lived (at "The Hermitage," now occupied by Mr. Hawkes) among his old people, taking the most lively interest in the affairs of the Church, and often preaching for his successor, for whom he had the greatest affection. At length on December 1st, 1849, he was called to his rest, at the age of seventy-two, leaving a widow and two sons to deplore his loss. No man ever held a higher position among the Nonconformists of Dorset, and no man has yet been found to quite fill his place. His grandson, the Rev. William Friend Durant, is the respected minister of Hadleigh, Suffolk.

In the same year that Mr. Durant resigned, an invitation was given to the Rev. Eustace Rogers Conder, M.A., son of Mr. Josiah Conder, the gifted hymn-writer, to become his successor, and accepted by him. "The church at Poole was then\* one of the most flourishing in the South of England, and it received its young minister with hearty welcome, and clung to him for seventeen years with tenacious and well-deserved affection. He put forth all his quiet, well-sustained power, to serve them in every way. His sermons were models of accurate thought, sound theology, clear statement, and pointed appeal. His work among the young was specially remarkable, and remains to this day a living memory amongst those who were associated with him. The large Sunday School, of over 600 scholars, with more than one branch, bringing up the numbers to nearly 1,000, gave him ample scope; and he worked zealously and perseveringly in this department, writing monthly lessons for the teachers, and himself attending at the school on the afternoon of one Sunday in each month, and examining on the lesson he had given out. For he believed, like all true teachers, that a little, thoroughly learned, was of far more value than a diffused and general half-knowledge, where nothing is truly known. Six village stations round the parent church claimed his attention and care; and for these he trained a band of village preachers. For some time he was Secretary of the Dorset County Association, which he largely remodelled and vigorously worked. In the latter part of his course at Poole he received a number of students in preparation for the service of the London Missionary Society; the names of

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\* In 1846 the church numbered 306 members.

the late John Hewlett, of Mirzapore, S. J. Whitmee, of Samon, and George Cousins, late of Madagascar, and now Association Secretary of the Parent Society, will prove how well he did his work of preparation. Another of his students says: 'He was specially at home with us in the class-room; and it has always been a matter of regret with me that he did not continue the arrangement with the London Missionary Society. I am confident if he had done so the results of his work in that direction might have been far greater than in pastoral work.' But it was not to be. In January, 1861, he accepted an invitation to East Parade Church, Leeds, in succession to the late Dr. Reynolds, principal of Cheshunt College.\* Here he became one of the best known and most influential Congregational ministers in England, and in 1873 was Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. He wrote much. His Congregational lecture on the 'Basis of Faith,' dedicated to his old friend and predecessor, Henry Rogers (whose name he bore), obtained for him the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Edinburgh. He was, amongst other things, while at Poole, an enthusiastic yachtsman. While here he married Mary, daughter of Mr. John Winterbotham, of Cheltenham. One of his daughters is headmistress of Milton Mount College. For many years he enjoyed almost uninterrupted health. But in the spring of 1892 he had an attack of influenza, from which he never wholly recovered. In vain he tried to do his old work. He resigned his charge in Leeds in April, died at Bournemouth in July, and was buried at Poole, near the spot where his ministry began.

Like his predecessor, Mr. Conder had a succession of assistants—viz., E. G. Cecil, who left in 1850, and died twenty years later at Tunbridge Wells; Geo. Clench Bellows, who removed in 1854; John Russell Goulty, B.A., who came November, 1854, and left for Saffron Walden 1858, and died at Brighton 1871. His students also rendered valuable help in connection with Parkstone and the village churches.

In 1851 a new organ was placed in the chapel, and on May

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\* Biog. Cong. Year Book, 1892.



2nd, 1855, "nine persons were dismissed from the church to form the nucleus of the new church at Bournemouth" (Richmond Hill), now grown into five or six flourishing churches.

On the first Sunday in July, 1861, the Rev. Robert Thomas Verrall, B.A., of New College, entered on his duties as Mr. Conder's successor in the pastorate. "The town," says he (in some "Recollections" with which he has kindly favoured the writer), "was then in a very depressed condition commercially. The trade with Newfoundland, which had been the staple occupation of the place, had gone elsewhere, and only two firms of traders represented the large number formerly prosperous and wealthy. Just a few weeks before great consternation had occurred by the stoppage of payment by Ledgard's Bank, in which most of the tradespeople of the town were depositors; and although there was not much ultimate loss, the shock to business in a small and not wealthy place was very severe. The great extension of Bournemouth, which has since brought new life to the old borough, had not begun. Indeed during the whole of my residence in Poole, two omnibuses daily from Poole and two from Christchurch sufficed to carry all the passengers who wanted to go to Bournemouth. A little coasting trade in corn and other produce, some export of china clay, a cordage and sail factory, and a few breweries gave employment; but the commercial aspects of the place were very depressing indeed.

"The Congregational Church had doubtless shared in the general depression, but it was still a large and fairly flourishing community. Dr. Conder (as he afterwards became) was just leaving for Leeds, after an extended and most valuable term of service, and the traditions of the place were of the highest. For more than three-quarters of a century it had never been without a pastor; for Mr. Durant served a little while with Mr. Ashburner, and Dr. Conder a little while with Mr. Durant. The old place in Skinner Street, since much improved and entirely refitted internally, retained its original structure, its plain upright unpainted deal pews, and its pulpit, so small that a very stout man could scarcely have got into it. But there were in actual communion nearly or quite six hundred members, a Sunday



School with about the same number of children, and six village stations, in each of which there were members, counted for some purposes along with the mother church, though for the most part with no voice in its management. Of these Parkstone, which was nearest and strongest, has become a separate church, with a considerable membership and a hopeful outlook; Longham has become affiliated to Bournemouth, and Sturminster Marshall to Wimborne; Broadstone is still associated with Poole; of Howe and Hamworthy I cannot speak. But in 1861 they were all supplied from Poole. Dr. Conder had received and taught some six or seven students for the L.M.S., and these young men took their large share along with preachers provided by the church, and the whole six places were regularly supplied. When I became pastor the old arrangement was revived. I had an assistant minister, who preached, except on the first Sunday in the month, in the afternoon at Poole and in the evening at Parkstone. The first Sunday was a busy day. We had the communion service in the afternoon, and a very pleasant and delightful service it used to be; the whole hour given up to the holy ordinance, with generally a full and devout attendance, and an absorption in the sacred enjoyment that would contrast very favourably with the hurry and sometimes the weariness at the close of a previous service. In the evening I went off to Parkstone or one of the village stations, my assistant preaching in Poole; and the Communion was observed and baptism administered as required, at the village where I happened to be.

"The church was somewhat disposed to rest on its traditions, which was not wonderful, considering what they were. There had been, beside the three eminent men who had filled the pastorate, such names as Morell Mackenzie and Morton Brown among their ministers. They had had in the ranks of their fellowship in earlier times most of the wealth and intelligence of the town, when the wealth and intelligence had been much greater. The church had originated in a secession, out of love for the Evangelical faith, from the old Presbyterian church, which had become distinctly and avowedly Unitarian. It had welcomed a friend and disciple of Robert Raikes, who brought

some twenty boys with him to form the first Sunday-school in the town. It had stood for purity and righteousness in the evil days of political decay and corruption. In concert with the church at Christchurch it had originated, and for some time helped to sustain, the mission that has blossomed into Richmond Hill Church, Bournemouth. And if things were not quite so prosperous as they had been, there were still in the company of the faithful men, and women not a few, who would have been a strength and an honour to any church. Only one, I think, now survives of those who held the office of deacon, and who used and served it well ; but Lankester, Whicher, Gollop, Buckley, Miller are names not forgotten or likely to be forgotten. And there were Kemp-Welches and Aldridges, and Durants and Hopkins and many scores besides, and of honourable women not a few. There was an admirable lady superintendent of the girl's Sunday-school, who could make her authority and influence felt, and who did her work as well as any of her brethren. And there were warm-hearted, strong-willed, bluff, brave seamen, who were not ashamed to carry their religion to sea with them, and who really expected to find and did find Christ in the vessel when the storms were high."

In October, 1862, Mr. Verrall was appointed Secretary of the Dorset Association. Referring to this he says, "My work in the county was chiefly, though by no means exclusively in the eastern part. My excellent friend, Rev. John Rogers of Bridport, was secretary for the western division ; but there is (or was) no Congregational church in Dorset where I have not preached or spoken. Dr. Conder once told me that there was about the same population in Leeds as in Dorset, and that there were twice as many Congregational church members in Dorset as in Leeds. Many of the churches were small and the members poor and growing poorer ; but they were not unworthy inheritors of the spirit that made at least one clergyman in every market town in the county prefer conscience to ease and comfort and join the ranks of the ejected in 1662.

"We had a practice, I believe, originated by Dr. Conder, who was secretary before me, of a triennial visitation of the whole of

the county. We spent a week over it, and in that week every church was visited and addressed by some two of the brethren from other churches, and most pleasant and helpful these occasions were. I may be pardoned for recalling one such expedition, in which, in company with my dear departed friend, Rev. Robert Ashton, then of Weymouth, I walked all round the west of the county, Beaminster, Morecombelake, Charmouth, Lyme Regis, Maiden Newton; and if any blessing followed our efforts it was returned tenfold in fellowship and joy to ourselves.

"These pleasant memories of the days that are gone, and the men and women that have entered into their rest, come back with sweet and hallowed influence as I write. May the churches of Dorset, scattered and perhaps always likely to need the help of their brethren more favoured with this world's goods, never look in vain for sympathy and brotherly care; and may the light of the Master's approval ever rest upon them all!"

Mr. Verrall's health broke down in 1868, and he resigned his charge under the conviction that his work was done. Happily he revived and in 1869 was able to resume the active work of the ministry, becoming pastor of the Tabernacle, Greenwich. On the death of Dr. Furguson, the first secretary of the fund, in 1878 he was appointed secretary of the Pastor's Retiring Fund, a position he has filled with great ability, discharging its duties with conspicuous success and kindness, down to the present time.

In the same year that Mr. Verrall left Poole the church added one more to its many useful agencies, by building the Bethel Sunday-school in Pump Alley.

The Rev. Thomas Orr, from Mitcham, succeeded to the pastorate in 1869, and removed to Windsor four years later. He was a good man and much esteemed. It is recorded of him that "in his last charge (Windsor) he was specially honoured and beloved by all classes; and his faithful administrations to members of the Royal Household, notably to "John Brown," called forth the personal thanks of Her Majesty the Queen." "He died at Crouch End, September 30th, 1895, aged 71." In his time the number of the members in Poole and Parkstone

(exclusive of those in other villages) is given in the Church Book, November 1st, 1871, as 535.

Mr. Orr was succeeded by the Rev. John Winsor Sampson, of the Western College, who came from Russell Town, Bristol, in 1875. He is well-known among the churches, and has the reputation of being a man of very considerable intellectual power. During his ministry the splendid new school-rooms which cover, and more than cover, the site of the original chapel in Lagland Street, were built. The old chapel, as stated above, had been sold in 1777. But it "was ultimately re-purchased by two members of the congregation, who adapted it at considerable expense for school-rooms, which had for years been used as a British School in the week and also for Sunday School."\* "The British School had flourished to such an extent as regards the boys' school, that numbers had to be rejected for want of sufficient accommodation." "The teachers and children in the Sunday School numbered (inclusive of the Bethel School) 796.\* To meet this growing and pressing need it was determined to celebrate the centenary of Skinner Street Chapel by building new schools. The area covered by the old schools being insufficient for the purpose, an adjoining cottage was bought with £100 left by Mr. William Gollop, who died Nov. 24th, 1862, "for the benefit of Skinner Street Sunday School." Upon the enlarged site the schools were built. Mr. Sampson removed to Penzance in 1876, and thence to Plympton, Devon, where he still resides.

His successor was the Rev. Ebenezer Evans, of Hackney College, who removed to Poole from City Road, London, in 1879. His ministry was greatly blessed. From the first it was marked by a revival of the spiritual life, and by renewed zeal and activity. He not only went forth bearing precious seed, but he looked for and expected a harvest of souls. And he was not wholly disappointed. In 1880 the interior of the chapel, described in Mr. Verrall's recollection above, and the vestries were thoroughly renovated, and the chapel was re-seated with pitch-pine seats at a cost of £1,000. Two-thirds of this sum was generously contributed by Messrs. Martin, John, George, and

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\* Brief Historical Statement, 1877.



James Kemp Welch. Mrs. John Kemp-Welch put the finishing touch on the work by presenting cushions for the pews. In 1886, the roof of the chapel was altered, as were also the galleries, and a new and large organ was provided. These various changes made the chapel most comfortable. Altogether the premises are most complete. Mr. Evans, like several of his predecessors, took great interest in the work in other parts of Dorset. He was in much request as a preacher on special occasions, and for two years served the County Association as its secretary. While here one of his sons was drowned while bathing, and the climate did not suit Mrs. Evans' health. To the great regret of the people of Poole and his brethren all over the county, he determined to remove to Yarmouth in 1879. He is now minister of Ramsden Street Church, Huddersfield.

The Rev. Owen Thoms, M.A., late of Holywell, Flint, was the next minister. He brought to the work a mind well cultivated, with a zeal and enthusiasm that owed something to his Welsh extraction. By his earnestness, his kindliness and willingness to serve he won the affection of a large circle of friends. He did not, however, find in Poole a congenial home, and he resigned in 1861, and almost immediately settled at Dalston, where he is happily doing admirable work. About the time of Mr. Thomas' leaving a difference of opinion among the people at Skinner Street resulted in the establishment of the Longfleet Church.

The Rev. Enoch Hall, the present minister, came from

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POSTSCRIPT.—The following information was intended to have a place above, but was accidentally omitted until too late for insertion in its proper place :

By a deed dated December 3rd, 1776, conveying the site of Skinner Street Chapel, made between John Skinner, merchant, and twenty-one trustees, it is provided (1) That any trustee going to reside ten miles from Poole for six months shall thereby cease to be a trustee, and (2) that the trustees and their successors shall "act under the direction of two-thirds of the subscribers and communicants of twelve months standing, assembled in public meeting, including the election or displacement of the minister for the time being, but no notice convening a meeting shall be deemed good unless signed by thirty subscribers and communicants.

By another deed, dated July 19th, 1828, power is given to "a committee of twenty-one persons, members of the congregation and subscribers (whether in Church communion or not) or the major part of them, to exercise all powers and direct all matters civil and ecclesiastical."



Gorleston, Yarmouth, in 1892. He is a hard student, a hard worker, and a capital preacher. The writer has heard it said in Poole that he well deserves his Christian name. The church, with its great schools, earnest people, and many and varied activities still holds the premier place among the churches of the county, and looks confidently forward to the fulfilment of the promise, "Thou shalt see greater things than these."

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### POOLE—LONGFLEET.

Longfleet Congregational Church was started in the spring of 1892. For several years the population had been increasing on the east side of Poole, in the direction of Parkstone, and people carrying on business in the town were beginning to reside in the neighbourhood of the Park, and on the high ground beyond the district known as Denmark. Since 1892 another district, that of Heckferd Park, has been laid out and built upon, many hundreds of new houses having been erected. The result of these changes has been to make Longfleet the centre of the population of the borough.

It was inevitable that amongst the members of the congregation assembling at Skinner Street, the scene of the spiritual activity of an influential church led by a succession of able ministers, some should clearly foresee that the time was at hand when, if Congregationalism was to maintain its due influence in the town, a more central site would have to be found. Other circumstances led to somewhat precipitate action being taken, and on the removal to Dalston of the Rev. Owen Thomas, who had shewn much interest in the question of a new site, either for church or mission, a few of the members obtained possession of some business premises in Longfleet High Street, and caused them to be transformed into a chapel capable of seating about 200 people.

A donation, or loan, from Miss Ann Green was the nucleus round which a few subscriptions were gathered towards the

expenses attendant on opening the place for worship, the active work being carried through by Mr. Robert Habgood, builder. The opening sermons were preached by the Rev. Alderman J. Fleming Williams, of London. Miss Green afterwards contributed £50 towards the Lecture Room which was erected behind the chapel in 1894, and at her death, during the summer of 1896, she bequeathed £300 in reduction of the mortgages. Conveyance of the house and shop next door had been previously obtained, and the whole premises were together placed under a Congregational Trust. Mortgages and bankers' loan now amount to the sum of £1400. The gross amount raised by the congregation for all purposes during six years is shewn by a summary appended to the balance sheet for 1897-8 to have reached £1166. Adding Miss Green's legacy, and taking account of contributions not in the form of money, the total may be put at £1500. The freehold of the premises, valued at from £40 to £50, has just been presented by Lord Wimborne. The whole premises constitute a valuable property, either for a church upon the present site, or for sale in the event of its being determined to build elsewhere.

About 100 persons have been in membership during the six years. The original membership was 25, the church having been formed at the commencement of the movement under the presidency of the Rev. J. E. Tunmer, retired minister, resident at Parkstone. This number rose to 40 in 1893, above which point, through removals and defections, it has not permanently increased. There is a Sunday-school, a Band of Hope, a Young People's Union, and a Ladies' Working Party.

Following upon an introduction given by the Rev. J. H. Lummis, of the Liberation Society, the Rev. G. B. Stallworthy, of Haslemere, Surrey, who is still in charge, undertook the pastorate in October, 1892.

G. B. S.

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## PORTLAND.

This romantic island is famous for its fortress, which is deemed impregnable ; for its vast Convict Establishment, containing at times as many as 1600 prisoners ; for its safe and capacious harbour, which will probably become the head-quarters of the Channel Fleet ; for the remarkable pebble ridge, named the "Chesil Beach," stretching many miles westward, which, with the island itself, has formed an efficient protection to parts of our county from the encroachments of the sea ; and also for its vast quarries of Purbeck and Portland stone, which has been used in the erection of St. Paul's Cathedral, the Law Courts, and many other public buildings. Two names are mentioned by Calamy, as having probably been ejected at Portland. One of them, Henry Way, junr., was appointed to the living in 1643, to succeed Dr. Henchman, sequestered. It is presumed that he was related to Benjamin Way, of Stafford in this county, and Barking in Essex (see Dorchester). The second name is John Sprint. Our information concerning both is scanty and uncertain. All that we can safely infer is this, that during the Commonwealth the gospel was clearly set forth in Portland by devout and conscientious men.

Nonconformist worship seems to have been held in the island about the middle of the last century, for the following license was issued by Quarter Sessions, "155 Dwelling House of John Stevens, Portland Presbyts., 4th October 1748"; we can obtain no particulars as to the persons who conducted the services, or how long they were continued. At that time the Rev. Thomas Reader, a man of earnest piety and Evangelical fervour, was pastor at Weymouth ; it is not unlikely that the movement was initiated by him.

The present Congregational church is of recent origin. About the year 1825, a few persons, some of whom had been connected with the Wesleyan body, converted a barn and stable, standing on the site of the present chapel, into a place of worship. The premises were handed over by Mr. Wm. Russell, for the remainder of the lease, free of charge. The first chapel was

built in 1827. The people raised £80 themselves, besides contributions in labour and materials. The local trustees were Henry Stone, John Way, and William Flew.

Frederick William Meadows was the first pastor. "Being at Weymouth in the year 1827, on his way to the Channel Islands, he was asked to supply at Upwey, and some other village stations, and so great was the acceptance with which he was received, that he was induced to remain and devote himself to the work at Upwey and the Isle of Portland. He was invited to take the pastorate of Hope Chapel, Weymouth, but he preferred devoting himself to the cause he had raised at Portland.\*" He was ordained November 5th, 1828; the Revs. M. Caston, J. Anderson, T. Durant, and J. H. Crump conducted the service, which was of special interest, and was probably the first of the kind ever held in the island. The attendance had so increased that an enlargement was necessary, and the building was re-opened September, 1828; Messrs. Anderson, Crump, and Hoby preaching on the occasion. A church was constituted October, 1828, under the guidance of the Rev. J. H. Crump, and consisted of Wm. Pearce, John Way, and Rebecca Stone. Rapid progress was made, and the outlook was most encouraging. But the union that promised so much was soon dissolved. The pastor went up to London to beg for funds to clear off the remaining debt, and whilst there preached at Shepherd's Market Chapel, Mayfair, this resulting in a pressing invitation which he felt himself bound to accept; he entered on the new sphere in October, 1831. It should be noted that Mr. Meadows received very little remuneration for his services at Portland. The people long remembered, gratefully and tenderly, all he had done for them, nor did he forget them, for soon after his settlement in London he collected for them a sum sufficient to discharge the debt on the building. He afterwards removed to South Molton, Glastonbury, and finally Gosport, where he died suddenly, 1862.

Charles Cannon followed immediately after, in October, 1831, and held office till his decease in 1854. The stipend being small, he supported himself partly by keeping a school. His memory

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\* Congl. Year Book, 1863, p. 245.

is still cherished as that of a worthy man, and a devoted minister.

James Cheney became pastor January 1st, 1855. He was educated at Cotton End, and had been the valued agent of the Home Missionary Society at Broadwindsor and Weytown in this county, for the space of 14 years. There were soon manifest signs of prosperity, and the little chapel became over-crowded. Seeing the necessity for a new place of worship, Mr. Cheney applied himself to the arduous task, and by his skilful planning and untiring perseverance brought the work to a successful issue. The neat and commodious structure cost altogether about £1400. The old site being deemed insufficient, an adjoining house was purchased for £60 and the freehold of the old site for £50. The new church was opened October 21st, 1858, the Revs. E. R. Conder, M.A., of Poole, and H. Quick of Bristol, preaching on the occasion. It was a great undertaking, for the people were not numerous or wealthy, and the burden of guiding the work, and collecting the funds, rested mainly on the pastor's shoulders; this probably helped to undermine his health, and he died in 1863, after a ministry of eight years. He was an earnest, faithful servant of Jesus Christ, and unceasing in his efforts for the good of his people. The Rev. W. Lewis preached a funeral sermon for him from the words "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

T. G. Beveridge, from Hackney College, accepted an invitation in 1864, and though his period of service was brief, evidences of success were not lacking; he removed in 1867 to Fareham. In 1865 two brethren are commended by the church for their efforts to induce careless ones to attend the house of God.

William White Sherren followed from Lytchett Minster, and remained nine years. During his ministry, a debt on the chapel was cleared off, a substantial manse built, and school and class rooms erected. The cost of the new buildings, about £1600, was raised at the time, with the exception of £110. All this testified to the wisdom and energy of the pastor, and to the high place held by him in the esteem and confidence of his people



and the public. Mr. Sherren resigned in August, 1876, and his last pastorate was at Sunningdale, Berks. He died in June, 1897, at Guy's Hospital, after a painful operation.

The building of the manse was greatly assisted by a generous donation of £180 from the late Mr. Nicholas Way. The deacons in 1876 were Charles Way, E. Allen, R. J. Andrews, and John Roper.

W. M. Fell came from Chorley in 1877, and left for New Zealand in 1879. In 1878 special services were held in celebration of the jubilee of the church.

William Robert Maurice Waugh, F.R.A.S., settled in 1879, from Lyme Regis. Soon afterwards (1883) the church was thoroughly renovated at a total cost of £203 10s. od., and this amount was all raised at the time. The stone communion table was given by Messrs. G. Mitchell and Son, and the new window blinds by Mr. Richard Cox. The Gothic screen at the back of the pulpit, and the ornamental glass in the vestry, were the work and gift of the pastor. Mr. Waugh resigned in 1892, from advancing age, after 12 years of happy and successful service. It should be added that Mr. Waugh is well versed in certain branches of science, and is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Thomas Williams, educated at the Nottingham Institute, and having held pastorates at Wistanswick, Salop, and at Farringdon, Berks, succeeded in 1892, but failing health led to his retirement at the end of 1896.

Mr. Ottwell Binns is at present in charge, and the prospect is hopeful. The diaconate is filled by Messrs. James Conway, James Norman, William Attwood, and Eli Gill.

With a large and growing population our friends have fine opportunities; may it be true of them, as of the primitive church, that walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they be edified and multiplied.

D.

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## PUDDLETOWN.

This is a large and beautiful village, situated five miles north-east of Dorchester in the valley of the Puddle. Though the Congregational Church is of recent origin, Nonconformity existed here at an early date. George King seems to have been ejected from the living in 1662, but we can gather no particulars about him except that in June, 1658, he joined with the ministers of Bere Regis, Tolpuddle, and other places, in giving a certificate for the appointment of James Rawson to the Rectory of Hazelbury Bryant. A license was taken out for "the house of Henry Williams, of Puddletown, Dorset, Sep. 30, 1672," and the same day Edward Downer (perhaps Dammer) was licensed to be a Congregational teacher in the said house. We can find no evidence of a permanent congregation being established.

Mention may be made of Theophilus Lindsay, a well known and much respected divine, who held the living about the middle of the last century. He seems to have been a diligent student of the Scriptures, and to have earnestly sought the best interests of the people committed to his care. In 1763 he removed to a living in Yorkshire, and ten years later he seceded from the Church of England on account of conscientious scruples. He founded the dissenting congregation in Essex Street, Strand, and was the minister for twenty years. "Very few exceeded him in learning, or piety. An honest, pious man who makes such a sacrifice for truth and conscience as he has done, is a glorious character, and deserves the respect, esteem, and veneration of every true Christian, whatever his particular sentiments may be."\*

The labours of John Styles Goddard, a draper and grocer in the village, should have a place in this record, for he was virtually a Congregationalist, though not identified with that body. Mr. Goddard, grieved by the lack of evangelical preaching in the parish church, walked to Chiselbourne, three and a half miles distant, to hear the Gospel; these visits, whilst meeting his needs and refreshing himself, led to the conviction that he must do something for his own village in which indifference and

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\* Job Orton.

immorality prevailed. Finding a malt-house empty he converted it into a place of worship, and began to preach in it about the year 1834. The result was ejection from house and business. Fortunately he owned a life-hold house in the village to which he removed, and on the premises in 1842 a small chapel was erected mainly at his own expense, and here he preached till his decease in 1870. He was a devout, conscientious man, helpful to many; his services were quite gratuitous, indeed he himself defrayed all the expenses connected with them; but extreme Calvinistic views cut him off largely from fellowship with other ministers and churches, and marred his usefulness. After his death a renewal of the lease could not be obtained, and the building was turned into a carpenter's shop. The Congregationalists of Dorchester (1834) opened a place here for preaching but we know not how long the services were continued. Some of Mr. Goddard's hearers, dissatisfied with the doctrines taught, consulted Mr. Wood, of Aithelhampton Hall, as to the need of a Congregational Church. Services were started in a cottage in 1862, and a church was formed, Geo. Richards and J. Dunman being appointed deacons; a Sunday school was established the same year. The meetings were held chiefly at the houses of Wm. Stickland and Geo. Richards. As no spot for a chapel could be obtained in the village, Mr. Wood gave, in the year 1865, a freehold piece of land some distance on the road towards his mansion, upon which a place of worship was forthwith erected. The new building was opened on Good Friday, March 30th, 1866; at the afternoon service the Rev. J. Fox, B.A., of Dorchester, preached; about 200 sat down to tea; and Mat. Devenish, Esq., presided at the evening meeting, in which neighbouring ministers and friends took part. A debt of £100 on the building was cleared off the following year, partly by the aid of a bazaar held at Dorchester.\* It may be added that the majority of Mr. Goddard's hearers joined, after his decease, the new congregation. The neat and pleasant manse was built soon after the chapel, and all liabilities upon it were discharged in the

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\* The local Trustees were Wm. H. Brett, carrier, Geo. Richards, postman, James House, hawker, Henry Childs, labourer.

spring of 1871. The decease of Mr. Wood, in March, 1867, was a serious loss to Bere Regis and Upwey, as well as Puddletown, indeed to all the churches in the county. He was a kind, Christian gentleman, with large means and a large heart, steadfast in his principles, and a tower of strength to his denomination.

The first pastor was T. L. Lessel ; trained under Mr. Cecil, of Turvey, for missionary work. he spent many years of honourable service in India, and settled at Puddletown, December, 1870. As evidence of the exodus from the Dorset villages, so trying to our churches, it may be mentioned that in 1872 both deacons left the place ; Mr. Richards with his family went to the United States, and the Church at his departure gave him £5 as a small expression of their sense of the services he had rendered the congregation. The treasurer, Mr. Goringe, also left the neighbourhood, and so did his successor, Mr. Davis. Despite these losses peace and prosperity prevailed, and when the grant from the County Association was considerably reduced the people came forward and made up the deficiency. Mr. and Mrs. Lessel were regarded with much respectful affection, and very deep regret was felt when ill health terminated the union in 1876. Mr. Lessel entered into rest 1884.

A. Oram, who had done splendid work for many years at Othery, Somerset, took charge for a short time, and was followed by W. A. Kyd, M.A. The need of a room for the Sunday school and week-night service being much felt, it was resolved to build. The foundation stone was laid Good Friday, 1880, by Mat. Devenish, Esq., and the opening took place the following August. On the same day a sale of work realized £16. Miss Wright, of London, most kindly collected about £40. The architect, Mr. H. R. Best, generously gave his services.

Mrs. Wood, who had been transferred, with Mr. and Mrs. T. A. Homer, from Bere Regis Church, in 1877, departed this life March 28th, 1880, an irreparable loss to the little cause she had watched over and aided in every way. The remains of this estimable lady were laid near those of her husband, among his kindred, the "James" family, in Ower Moigne Churchyard (the

ancestors of the eminent J. A. James, of Birmingham, resided in this village). Mr. Wood, it may be added, started and supported a British School at Athelhampton, nor must the annual gathering of the Bible Society at the Hall be forgotten, which awakened much interest, and was largely attended. Mr. Kyd, who left in 1881, was succeeded by W. M. Fell, previously at Portland, who remained till 1884. Frederick Vaughan came immediately afterwards, remaining till the end of 1886, when the state of Mrs. Vaughan's health necessitated a change. There had been many accessions to the church during Mr. Vaughan's pastorate, and his removal was much regretted. Rowland Mark, educated at Hackney College, and previously pastor at Framlingham, began his ministry here in 1887, and in 1891 accepted a call to Langport. In 1889 Mr. J. Burnham, an evangelist from Mr. Spurgeon's College, held a ten days' mission with good results. In 1891 an effort was made to group this church with that of Bere Regis, but, both being unwilling, the attempt was abandoned. The Rev. J. McClune Uffen, of Dorchester, now undertook the oversight, supplying the pulpit chiefly with Mansfield and Nottingham students, and often walking out himself to take a week-night service. The experiment met with not a little success.

In the spring of 1895 Walter Ebbs, formerly at West Lulworth, was invited to supply the pulpit, and still remains the valued pastor of an attached and united people. In 1893, G. W. Homer, Esq., sold to the Trustees for £30 a considerable plot of land, adjoining the manse, which now forms a spacious and productive garden. Mr. Thomas Alner Homer and Mrs. Homer are worthy of honourable mention. During their residence at Spetisbury (1844-8); whilst attending Bere Regis Chapel (where Mr. Homer filled the office of deacon); and all through their association with Puddletown, they were faithful friends and generous supporters. Mr. Homer, who died 1895, was a fine specimen of the Dorset yeoman. His son, Mr. Ernest Homer, is treasurer, and, in conjunction with Mr. W. Legg, fills the office of deacon.

Though free from the social persecutions of former times, may



our friends have the true martyr spirit, faithfulness to God and their own conscience, and so be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

D.

### RAMPISHAM.

This remote village, about four miles north-west from Maiden Newton, was favoured with the earnest ministrations of Francis Bampffield, M.A., who was instituted to the living in 1640. Calamy gives this description of him: "He took great pains to instruct his people and promote true religion among them. Having an annuity of £80 a year settled upon him for life, he spent all the income of his place in acts of charity among his parishioners, *e.g.*, in giving them Bibles and other good books, setting the poor to work, and relieving the necessities of those who were disabled; not suffering a beggar, knowingly, to be in his parish. While he was here he began to see that the Church of England in many things needed reformation—in regard to doctrine, worship, and discipline; and therefore, as became a faithful minister, he heartily set about it, making the laws of Christ his only rule. But herein he met with great opposition and trouble. About this time, the people of Sherborne wanting a minister, earnestly solicited him to come thither. This place being very populous there was more work but less wages . . . he accepted their call. Here he continued to labour with universal acceptance and great success till the Act of Uniformity took place. Being in his conscience utterly dissatisfied with the conditions of conformity, he took his leave of his sorrowful congregation the Lord's-day before Bartholomew-day, 1662"\*

Mr. Bampffield was succeeded by Thomas Crane, or Craine, M.A., a man of kindred spirit, who had been an assistant to the eminent Richard Alleine. "He was appointed to this living by Cromwell, and ejected 1662, after which he settled at Beaminster, where he became pastor to a Dissenting congregation, and died there 1714, aged 84."—Hutchins. (See Beaminster, pages 6 and 7).

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\* Vol. ii. p. 49. (See also Sherborne).

Mr. Thomas Denny, who, from 1798 to 1802, was stationed at Maiden Newton, as Home Missionary, thus writes: "I went to Rampisham: under my first sermon a poor woman went away exclaiming, 'come see a man that told me all that I ever did.' She became a constant hearer and a good supporter of the cause." We cannot say if the preaching was continued after Mr. Denny's departure in 1802. (See page 163).

The "Christian Witness" for 1845 gives the following facts:—"In the retired village of Rampisham, Dorset, a new place of worship was opened on Christmas-day, 1844, with two public services, which were numerous attended. At one of them a sermon was preached by the Rev. Alfred Bishop, of Beaminster; at the other by the Rev. T. Denny, of Maiden Newton. The origin of this place of worship is connected with certain movements in the parish on the part of the officiating clergyman, which have given offence to a large proportion of the inhabitants, as partaking too much of the modern Anglo-Catholic character. The result is that the seceders from the parish church, including the choir of singers, &c., have voluntarily and unsolicited from without availed themselves of the provisions of the Toleration Act, and provided, as above stated, for their own religious accommodation."

Mr. Bishop, who preached at the opening, gave the movement wise counsel and efficient help; he bought the property, containing about 20 perches, from William Tompkins, for £60, and in 1867 this was put in trust, the local trustees being Peter Davis and John Alfred Davis. Services, which had been conducted by the Maiden Newton ministers, were discontinued when growing infirmities rendered Mr. Miall unequal to the long walk, and for some seventeen years the place was shut up. In June, 1894, the Rev. J. McClune Uffen and Mr. C. J. Foster, J.P., of Dorchester, visited the old Meeting-house, and, as the result, got it restored and fitted for worship at the cost of about £25. In the year 1895 Mr. Geo. Clarke, of Dorchester, was appointed, under Mr. Foster's oversight, to supply the chapel and work in the surrounding villages. Considerable interest has been aroused, and much good seems to have been done. D.

## SHAFTESBURY.

Shaftesbury has an indisputable claim to be considered one of the oldest towns in England. It is just over a thousand years since Alfred the Great re-built it after it had been almost completely destroyed during the contest with the Danes. Its situation upon the top of a noble eminence, which commands extensive views to the south-west, must have made it a place of great strength in ancient times. Its historic associations are both numerous and fascinating. A mere catalogue of the people distinguished in arms, in politics, in literature and in religion, that have been more or less closely associated with the venerable borough would occupy a considerable space. But times have changed, and it is no more the busy, interesting and important centre that it once was, though its fine, bracing climate is happily bringing it into repute once more as a health resort. Though ancient, the town has nothing decayed in its appearance, "with respect to architectural appearance and comfortable, convenient habitations, Shaftesbury will compare favourably," says Hutchins truly, "with any other town of similar size in the Kingdom."

There is a tradition that in this town there existed one of the most ancient nonconformist churches in the kingdom—that here there was a "separated" church in the reign of Henry VIII. This, however, is mere tradition. So far as the writer has been able to discover it rests upon no evidence that is at present accessible. If ever such a church existed it must have passed away before the Commonwealth period.

The present church dates back to the Act of Uniformity in 1662, when the Rev. Thomas Hallett, junr., was ejected from the Rectory of St Peter's. Leaving the parish church, Mr. Hallett preached in private houses to the people who, having been blessed by his ministry previously, desired to enjoy it still. It may be convenient here to refer to a perfectly friendly difference of opinion that early arose among the ministers ejected from their livings, and intended to be silenced by the Act of

Uniformity, and the Conventicle and Five Mile Act,\* which speedily followed, as to what course they ought to adopt. Some thought that they ought to act cautiously, and, as far as possible, preach in secret, so as to give no offence to the civil magistrates. Others thought that they ought to act boldly and openly and preach the gospel with open doors. They had, at the command of Parliament, quietly and peaceably given up their livings, thus owning the right of the civil power to determine the conditions upon which they might retain their office and emoluments as ministers in the State church. But there, they contended, the power of the magistrate ought to end—he had no right to interfere in matters of conscience, or in the free expression of opinion between men who desired neither pay nor position from the State. And in their opinion it was the duty of the ejected ministers to protest against his usurpation of the crown rights of Jesus Christ, by publicly continuing their work, even though bonds and imprisonment might await them. Mr. Hallett was among those who held the latter opinion. He was often in trouble in consequence. In 1663 he was arrested while holding a public service in Shaftesbury. The Rev. F. Bampffield of Sherborne, the Rev. Peter Ince of Donhead, and the Rev. John Sacheverell of Stalbridge, who were taking part in the service, were arrested at the same time. They were all cast into Dorchester prison, where Mr. Hallett remained a short time, but was ultimately released on payment of a fine of forty marks.† While in prison he and his fellow-prisoners took it in turn, day by day, to preach through the bars of their prison-house to the people of the town who crowded outside. On his release, he seems to have found it wise to remove from Shaftesbury, as he was required to do by the Five Mile Act. He thereupon went to live at Horton.‡ There is little doubt that he still visited and preached among his old people. How long he did this, and whether he removed or died, it is impossible now to say.

In 1672, when King Charles II. issued his famous Indulgence

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\* See p. 128.

† Calendar of State Papers, Dom. 1663, p. 601.

‡ Cod. Tenn., Bp. of Bristol's Report.

suspending the penal laws against dissenters, we find that the Rev. William Eastman, who had been ejected in 1662 from Everley, Wilts, for nonconformity, and who had probably been resident some time in Shaftesbury, took out a license to be a Presbyterian teacher in the houses of Richard Harris and Joseph Ward in Shaftesbury.\* In the same year (August 10th) Giles Paris was licensed to be an Independent teacher in Shaftesbury. Nothing more is known of him. Mr. Eastman remained here through the stormy days of persecution that succeeded the recall of the Indulgence in 1673, continuing his work as best he might, and here he died "after he had continued his ministry for many years."† In his time, viz.:—On March 1st, 1700, the first piece of the property of the church was purchased. It consisted of three garden plots and a building, soon afterwards converted into the present manse. A stone from the old building is inscribed "John Huse, 1676."

Mr. Eastman was succeeded by the Rev. Samuel Bates, who took this as his first charge about 1703. He had been here some time when he wrote a letter dated February 17th, 1704, entitled "A letter to a backslider," which was published many years afterwards.‡ He did not stay long, but removed to Warminster in 1705, where he had a large congregation. He there embraced Arian sentiments, with the result that the congregation was divided and an evangelical secession took place. He died at Warminster in 1761, § "being then very old."

In 1706 (November 13th) the site of the old Meeting-house in Muston's Lane—measuring 70 feet long by 68 feet broad—was conveyed to John Crosby, Shaston, mercer, John Arney, tallow-chandler and others, "on which to build a Meeting-house." It would appear that the Meeting-house was soon afterwards built, for a "new Meeting-house for Presbyterians under the care of Mr. Lobb," was licensed July 15th, 1707. It would also appear that there was some danger of its light being obstructed, at least on one side, for in 1708 John Hatheway executed a deed of promise "not to darken by any building the Meeting-house."

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\* State Papers, Dom., 1672.

† Calamy.

‡ Theological Mag. i., 371.

§ Murch's Western Churches.



The versatile Rev. Theophilus Lobb followed Mr. Bates in 1706. He was the son of the Rev. Stephen Lobb, minister of Fetter Lane, London, who was called "The Jacobite Independent," because of his frequent attendance at the court of James II. after the declaration of liberty of conscience. His mother was the daughter of the Rev. Theophilus Polwhele, Nonconformist minister of Tiverton, and granddaughter of the Rev. Wm. Benn, of Dorchester. "He was educated for the ministry under the Rev. Thos. Goodwin, at Pinner. In 1702 he settled at Guildford\* and there became acquainted with a physician from whom he received some medical instruction. About 1706 he removed to Shaftesbury, where he began to practise as a physician. In 1713 he settled at Yeovil, where he practised with great success, though he still continued the ministry. Dissentions in his congregation (respecting singing, one party opposing and the other advocating the introduction of new tunes) induced him in 1722 to remove to Witham, Essex. On the 26th June of that year he was created M.D. by the University of Glasgow, and was admitted a Fellow of the Royal Society, March 13th, 1728-9. In 1732, he received a call from the congregation at Haberdasher's Hall, London, but his ministry not proving acceptable he resolved in 1736 to apply himself wholly to medicine. On September 30th, 1740, he was admitted a licenciate of the Royal College of Physicians, and practised thenceforth in London. On 21st May, 1762, a patent was granted him 'for a tincture to preserve the blood from dizziness and a saline scorbutic acrimony' (which let those who can do so understand). He died May 19th, 1763, in his 85th year, and was buried in Bunhill Fields."† We have given this account of Mr. Lobb, because from it, better than any description of our own, the reader will understand the manner of man he was. He was the son of an Independent and was himself also of that persuasion. That he held two charges—at Shaftesbury and at Haberdasher's Hall—that were nominally Presbyterian, shows

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\* During his residence in Guildford he married Frances, dr. of Dr. Cook, and a descendant of Sir Walter Raleigh.

† Dict. National Biog.

how nearly related these bodies were. Dr. Lobb's memoirs by his brother-in-law, the Rev. John Greene of Wimborne, show that he was an earnest, humble and devout christian.

Mr. Lobb was followed by the Rev. James Green, a student from the Rev. John Moore's Academy at Bridgwater.\* Nothing is known about him except that he removed to Exeter to succeed the Rev. Mr. Furze, in 1724, and that he was probably, almost certainly, an Arian. His ministry, like that of so many other Arian ministers, appears to have been disastrous to the church. On his removal there was difficulty in getting a minister, probably because the congregation had become so small. The pulpit, therefore, remained vacant for some years and the congregation further declined.

An event now happened that merits a word or two of explanation—the people decided, as the people at Birdbush did later, to discard the name Presbyterian and to call themselves Congregationalists. There must have been some reason for this other than mere caprice. The fact is that the two names were beginning to stand for widely different theological positions. Presbyterian was associated with Arianism, which leaned more and more towards Unitarianism, and was characterised by dry, lifeless, moral preaching, with all the essentials of gospel teaching minimised or left out. On the other hand Congregationalism was becoming more and more definitely evangelical. All over the country little companies of earnest people, growing hopeless of hearing the gospel in the Presbyterian Meeting houses, were withdrawing and forming themselves into Congregational Churches, where the divinity and the atonement of Christ were preached, and increasing congregations gathered to hear the word of life.† The change of name, therefore, must be looked upon as a sign that the church, wearied with the lifeless preaching that had almost emptied the Meeting-house, had determined to cast in their lot with the rising evangelical movement. This does not mean that the people had changed their sentiments, it only means that they adopted a name which revealed, rather than concealed,

\* Brit. Mus. Addl. MSS., 24,442.

† See p. 50.

their hereditary theological position. Possibly it was in part also due to the influence of Mr. Lobb.

The re-named church proceeded to invite to the pastorate the Rev. David Jones, a student of the Carmarthen College. It is quite uncertain when he came. He was certainly here in 1738,\* probably some years earlier. Under his earnest ministry the cause revived considerably. The spirit of liberality seems to have been evoked, for in July, 1741, Elizabeth Lush, widow, of Stower Provost, left £100 for the benefit of the church. Of her will, Thomas Parlane was the sole executor. In March, 1747, Mr. Parlane died, leaving £200 to the trustees of the Meeting-house, and showing his confidence in the minister by appointing him his sole executor and residuary legatee. His confidence was not misplaced. Mr. Jones found a good investment for the monies entrusted to him, when, on Christmas Day, 1750, he bought Perry Lands, Semley, amounting to 12 acres, with rights on the common. The deed states that the land was bought "for the better support and maintenance of the Interest of the Congregation of Presbyterian Protestant Dissenters in Shaston." The use of the word Presbyterian was probably due to legal advice rather than a change of front on the part of either minister or people. On January 2nd, 1752, the Rev. D. Jones and others conveyed Perry lands to a body of trustees, whose successors still hold the property on the original trusts, and it produces at present about £35 a year. Mr. Jones left the church he had served so well for nearly twenty years in 1753, going to Walsall. "He died minister of Walsall, 1762."†

During Mr. Jones' pastorate, another event of considerable interest took place. Under date 1750, Monday, 3rd September, we read in Wesley's journals: "We rode from Middlesey (Middlezoy) to Shaftesbury, where I preached, between five and six, to a serious and quiet congregation. We had another happy opportunity at five in the morning, when abundance of people were present. I preached at noon in the most riotous part of the town, just where four ways met; but none made any noise or

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\* Congregational Fund Board Minutes.

† Brit. Mus. Addl., MSS. 24,484.

spoke one word, while I called 'the wicked to forsake his way.' As we walked back, one or two foul-mouthed women spoke unseemly ; but none regarded or answered them a word."

"Soon after I was set down, a constable came, and said : 'Sir, the Mayor (? Mr. Charles Pinhorn) discharges you from preaching in this borough any more.' I replied : 'While King George gives me leave to preach, I shall not ask leave of the Mayor of Shaftesbury.' "

The Mayor's conduct only quickened Wesley's interest in the place, with the result that the famous evangelist visited it very much more frequently than any other place in the county. After having made several other visits, which appear to have caused him to expect that great success would attend the work he had inaugurated, he came to open the Wesleyan Chapel in 1766. "Friday, August 29th, I was thoroughly tired out before we came to Shaftesbury. However, at six, I preached in the new house, filled within and without, to the no small astonishment it seemed, of most of the hearers. But it was a time of consolation as well as conviction. I trust many will experience both in this House." But, somehow, his hopes seem to have been disappointed, and two years later there is a new tone in his journal, "1768, Wednesday, September 28th. Hence (from Stalbridge) I went on to cold, uncomfortable Shaftesbury, and spoke exceeding strong words. All seriously attended : some seemed to understand, and a few to feel, what was spoken." This disappointment found new expression later, where we read, "1771, Monday, September 30th. . . . Came to Shaftesbury and preached to a numerous congregation, but wonderfully unconcerned. I scarce know a town in England where so much preaching has been to so very little purpose." Wesley's last reference to the old town is, "1785, Monday, 15th August. I preached in Shaftesbury at nine, to such a congregation as I had not seen there before. I was glad to see among them the gentleman who, thirty years ago, sent his officer to discharge me from preaching in his borough."

But to return to 1753, when the Rev. David Jones left the Congregational Church. The introduction of Methodism appears



to have drawn off a section of the community, as was perhaps to be expected. And possibly the success which attended lay preaching among the Methodists, which has always been a remarkable feature of their work, made the church in no hurry to fill the vacant pastorate. Whatever the cause may have been, the fact is that for some years no successor to Mr. Jones was appointed, but the pulpit was supplied by a variety of preachers. At length, however, the Rev. Moses Davies, a native of Cardiganshire, was invited to settle about 1758. He had been educated at Coward's College, which he entered in 1750. On the completion of his college course he remained some time without a charge until he received an invitation to Shaftesbury.\* He did not remain here very long, but removed in 1760 to Terling, in Essex, and died 1767.

After another interval of a year or two, the Rev. Isaac Henley, who had also been educated at Coward's College, came from Harwich about 1763. He remained a little, but only a little longer than his predecessor, removing to Hatfield Broadoak in 1766, where he kept a boarding-school—that resource of unsuccessful ministers in former times. From Hatfield he went to Bishop's Stortford, and thence to Ponder's End. He died at Edmonton in 1794.†

Mr. Henley was succeeded by the Rev. Nathaniel Phillips, who appears to have continued here some ten years. Very little is known of him, except that he signed a petition to parliament as minister of Shaftesbury in 1773, and shortly afterwards left to become minister of Tewkesbury, whence he removed to Derby, where he was in 1788 and where he was very highly esteemed.‡ He died March 24th, 1798.‡

In 1778 the Rev. John Berry, a great-grandson of Colonel James Berry, one of Cromwell's Major-Generals, and also of Sir Charles Wolseley, settled here. It was his first charge and he does not appear to have found it a very congenial one. Perhaps, like Wesley, he found the people difficult to move. Possibly the political corruption of the times was to some extent responsible

\* Coward's Ac. List of Students. † Ibid. and Wilson and Hunter MSS.

‡ Gent's Mag.



for this. In those days and until 1831, Shaftesbury returned two members to Parliament. In Oldfield's Representative History there is a curious story of how wholesale bribery was carried on at election times. The facts came out on the hearing of a petition by Hans Winthorpe Mortimer, Esq., the defeated candidate at the election held in 1774, against the return of two Indian nabobs, Sir Thos. Rumbold and Sir Francis Sykes. He alleged that "the two sitting members . . . had been guilty of many gross and notorious acts of bribery and corruption. It appeared in evidence on the trial of this petition, that money to the amount of several thousand pounds had been given among the voters in sums of 20 guineas a man. . . . A person concealed under a ludicrous and fantastical disguise, and called by the name of Punch, was placed in a small apartment, and through a hole in the door delivered out to the voters, parcels containing 20 guineas each, upon which they were conducted to another apartment where they found another person called Punch's secretary, who required them to sign notes for the value received; these notes were made payable to another imaginary character, to whom was given the name of Glenbucket. Two of the witnesses swore they had seen Punch through the hole in the door, and that they knew him to be Mr. Matthews, an alderman of the town." The evidence satisfied the Committee that the facts were as stated; the two baronets were unseated and Mr. Mortimer was declared returned for one of the seats. To prevent a recurrence of the evil practices complained of the writ for the election of a member to the second seat was refused. This was equivalent to a temporary partial disfranchisement of the borough. Hutchins states also that property was let at one third below its value in order to increase the influence of the proprietors over the tenants, who would, of course, be likely to vote as they were desired for fear of losing their holdings. Corruption such as this, which was common enough in those days, was not conducive to the success of any minister. It ate like a canker into the life of the inhabitants, rendering them insensible to the influence of even such a man as Wesley. Mr. Berry, who was a young man of more than ordinary promise, remained little more

than two years, leaving for Romsey in 1780. "He was successively Independent minister of Shaftesbury, Romsey, West Bromwich, classical tutor of Homerton College (where he was succeeded by the Rev. Dr. Pye Smith, one of the greatest scholars of his age) and finally minister of Camberwell Green, London, until his retirement from ill-health. He left four sons, three of whom became ministers." \* A capital portrait of him, engraved by the famous Isaac Taylor, is to be found in the *Theological Magazine* for October, 1802.

The next minister was the Rev. James Merchant, who came from Newberry, and remained many years. He died here March 8th, 1797, aged 54, and was buried in the chapel yard. A tablet in the chapel perpetuates his memory. It describes him as "a faithful labourer in the vineyard of his Lord." He was one of the earliest members of the Dorset Association. It is said that about this time a flourishing business was carried on in the neighbourhood in the manufacture of shirt buttons. But the trade has long since disappeared. "In 1797 (the year of Mr. Merchant's death) the meeting-house was repaired at a cost of £64 4s. 1d." †

Soon afterwards the Rev. Samuel Hackett became the minister. He remained something short of two years, leaving in 1799 to become assistant to Mr. Miller at High Wycombe, whence he removed in September, 1805, to Mayfair, London, where the congregation considerably increased under his ministry and the chapel was twice enlarged. He was there in 1814 ‡

In a book entitled "The Church at Bird-bush: Its Origin and History," by C. Harrison, which is by far the best book of its kind that we have seen, we read that :

"At the death of the Rev. W. Moore (of Bird-bush), circumstances necessitated the dissolution of the union of the churches at Bird-bush and Tisbury. There being a vacancy at Shaftesbury, it was resolved to try another experiment, by uniting the church at Bird-bush with the church in that town, under the oversight of one pastor. In the minute book of the church at Bird-bush there is the following entry.

"October, 1799. At a general meeting of the trustees, members and

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\* Dict. Natnl. Biog. † Endorsement on Deed.

‡ Wilson's Dissenting Churches iv. 56.

subscribers to this church, it was unanimously agreed, that a call be signed and forwarded to the Rev. T. Williams, of Salisbury, to invite him to take upon him the pastoral charge of this church, and the church at Shaftesbury, now in connexion and union with us. This call was therefore executed and signed by 103 trustees, members, and hearers, on the part of Bird-bush, and 109 on the part of Shaftesbury, and forwarded to the Rev. Mr. Williams on Saturday, the 6th day of October, 1799. The Thursday following, we, as united churches, were favoured with his answer, which contained great sentiments of affection, and a determination to accede to our request in becoming the pastor of the respective churches. On the Sabbath following, October 13th, he commenced the labours of his ministry, by preaching in the morning amongst us (the text he selected was Hosea ii. 15), and in the afternoon and evening amongst our dear friends and brethren at Shaftesbury. Several papers and articles of agreement are signed by the members of both churches relative to the Union, and left in the possession of the Rev. Mr. Adams, of Salisbury.' "

Immediately after Mr. Williams' settlement the Church at Bird-bush framed a new set of rules for the admission of members &c., and also entered into a new and solemn church covenant, which are printed in the book above mentioned.

It is more than likely that the same course was pursued at Shaftesbury also, but if so all record of these transactions has disappeared.

The union of the two churches did not continue after Mr. Williams left to become pastor of the church at Lutterworth in 1803. Apparently, the members of the church at Bird-bush were dissatisfied with the amount of service rendered them by the minister, for the members "determined to have religious services more regularly conducted among themselves, by electing and supporting their own minister." Mr. Williams was later on minister successively of Warminster and Wincanton.\*

About the end of 1803, or the beginning of 1804, the Rev. John Wainwright Morren, late of Yeovil, where the Antinomians in his congregation seem to have caused him a good deal of worry, accepted a call, and became the minister. But his worries seem to have followed him into his new sphere. During his ministry an unhappy division took place, which broke up both

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\* Wilson MSS. and Centenary Report of the Somerset Union.

church and congregation. The financial condition of the church at length became so unsatisfactory that the church appealed to the County Association for help, whereupon, at the meeting held at Dorchester, October 8th, 1818, it was resolved: "That the friends of the Independent church and congregation at Shaftesbury shall receive any aid the Society can afford them under their existing circumstances, and should they collect, in order to clear off their arrears, the Society will sanction their case." About the same time, Mr. Morren, at whose door, no doubt, the blame for this state of things was laid, resigned. He did not, however, leave the neighbourhood at once. But at the Association Meeting at Blandford in April, 1819, at which he was present, it is evident that he was no longer the minister, for there is a "Memorandum. The Society being in arrear, could not aid the Shaftesbury cause, on which account Dr. Cracknell engaged to find, from Weymouth, for two years *after they have a minister*, £5 per annum, and Mr. Trowbridge, from Cerne, £2."\* Mr. Morren appears to have removed to London, where he was in August, 1839.†

The next minister was one whose name was at one time familiar to every Nonconformist in Dorset and the neighbouring counties. Durant, of Poole; Keynes, of Blandford; Saltern, of Bridport; Cracknell, of Wareham; Hargreaves, of More-combelake; and Evans, of Shaftesbury, were names to charm with. All the churches were proud of them, as they had every reason to be. The Rev. Thomas Evans, of whose ministry we have now to speak, was born at Llandysilio, Montgomery, February 10th, 1792. After some years spent in commercial pursuits, first at Liverpool, and afterwards in London, he entered Hoxton Academy. "Having honourably passed nearly the whole of the usual curriculum, he was sent by the late Thomas Wilson, Esq., on an exploring and evangelising mission into Lincolnshire, and was instrumental in laying the foundation of a church at Long Sutton, and several other places. Returning to London from his tour, he was sent to supply the vacant pulpit at Shaftesbury. A unanimous call was the result, and he

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\* Dorset Association Minutes. † Home Miss. Mag., 1839, p. 185.



almost immediately (August, 1819) entered on the sphere of labour which he occupied for the long period of half a century. As a preacher he was evangelical, practical and earnest. His sermons abounded in scriptural quotations and illustrations. His native wit and exuberant imagination, together with his flow of spirits, sometimes led him to cause a smile to pass over the countenances of his auditory, and at other times his personal and pathetic appeals would draw tears from almost every eye. He will be long and gratefully remembered as the originator of Sunday Schools, not only in the town in which he lived, but in many villages around.”\*

In October, 1850, the Dorset Association met at Shaftesbury. The meeting was memorable from the fact that action was taken upon a matter that had often engaged the attention of the members. A Committee was appointed †“to take an early opportunity of bringing under the consideration of the religious public of the Independent denomination” the desirability of forming a National Union of the Congregational Churches, which, while leaving the County Associations to do the work they had hitherto undertaken, should draw the whole of the churches in England and Wales nearer together, enable them to speak on public and religious questions with one voice, promote the extension of Congregational principles, organise a Ministers’ Old Age Pension scheme, and otherwise attend to the general interest of the whole body. The Committee issued a letter to the churches all over the country, dated November 30th, 1830, and had the happiness of having their efforts approved by the denomination generally as was shown by the formation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in the following year.

In 1834, Mr. Evans bought a piece of land adjoining the chapel burial-ground from the Marquis of Westminster, for £34, on which a school, used as a British Day School and Sunday

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\* Memoir Congregational Year Book, 1870.

† This Committee consisted of Rev Thos. Durant, Poole; Rev. Richard Keynes, Blandford; Rev. D. Gunn, Christchurch; Rev. J. Reynolds, Romsey; Rev. J. E. Good, Salisbury; M. Fisher, Esq., Blandford; B. Chandler, Esq., Sherborne; W. Tice, Esq., Sopley; Jno. Brown, Esq., and Rev. Jas. Brown, Wareham.



School, was soon afterwards built. To the funds of the British School, he was for many years a most liberal contributor, as he was also its most devoted manager. In addition to the work of his own church, he took a deep interest and a prominent part in all the philanthropic activities of the neighbourhood, and was esteemed by Christians of all denominations. The evangelistic work carried on in the villages had a specially warm place in his heart. It was in connection with this village work that one of the sorrows of his ministerial life came to him. For many years he superintended the work at Stour Row, regularly visiting the place and preaching and administering the sacraments. About 1849, he found that the Lord's Supper was being celebrated when neither he, nor any other ordained minister was present. His protest against what he regarded as a breach of order was resented, and led to this village church separating itself from the church at Shaftesbury, and withdrawing from the Dorset Association of Congregational churches. It is possible that Mr. Evans, whose word had come to be almost law in Shaftesbury, was a little too autocratic in his dealing with the villagers. But the separation, and some unfortunate expressions that accompanied it, cut him to the quick.\* The original Meeting-house having become very dilapidated was pulled down in 1859 and rebuilt. The new chapel, which is a model of comfort, measures 56ft. long by 36ft. broad. The front is of Bath stone, and has a pediment supported by four massive circular columns, with foliated Corinthian capitals. The chapel is lighted by five windows on each side, there is a gallery across the entrance end, and the building is supplied with an improved warming apparatus. The entire cost, including vestry and lecture-room, amounted to £1,482 1s. 3d. This handsome chapel may be looked upon as Mr. Evans' memorial. Without his initiative and untiring energy in seeking subscriptions, it would never have been built. It was to him a source of great thankfulness in his closing illness that the chapel was not only built, but paid for. After a long and extremely painful illness, borne with Christian resigna-

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\* See pp. 39, 40, and for further account under Stour Row.

tion and unshaken faith, he passed to his rest January 23rd, 1869, and was buried in the chapel-yard, amid a vast concourse of sorrowing spectators. One of his last words to a brother minister who visited him in his illness was : " Preach Christ, my brother—Christ first, midst, last."

It ought to be added that Mr. Evans kept a school for young gentlemen during the earlier years of his ministry, until one of his pupils committed suicide, which so affected him that the work became distasteful to him. He was also greatly assisted by his wife, who conducted a successful boarding school for young ladies, and, by so doing, made it possible for him to bring up his family and exercise a liberality, which otherwise would have been impossible, on the moderate stipend the church was able to afford.

The church, which was now in a much more flourishing state than at any previous period of its history, proceeded to invite the Rev. Geo. J. Woodward, a student of New College, who had been for a short time assistant to the Rev. E. Jones, of Tacket Street, Ipswich, to the pastorate. After two years ministry here (1869—1872), during which he is said to have excited some amusement among his brother ministers by his violent attacks on the Established Church, he conformed, and report says has been a successful clergyman.

On October 31st, 1871, the last appointment of trustees of the chapel, manse and Perry Lands, was made. The trustees appointed were Thomas and Samuel Gould, Donhead ; Charles Jupe and Robert Goldsborough, Mere ; M. Fisher, Chas. Bond and C. T. Curtis, Blandford ; Jas. White and F. J. Long, Shaston ; T. Scammell, Stalbridge ; G. White (now in Tasmania) : E. and R. Hibberd, Tisbury ; W. H. Williams, M.D., Sherborne ; J. S. Gould, R. H. Sainsbury and J. Chapman, jun., Trowbridge. The greater number of these gentlemen have since passed away. Two of these names deserve special mention. Mr. Jupe, as is well known, took a lively and practical interest in every movement for the spread of the gospel at home and abroad, and was for many years one of the best known men in the Congregational body. He was, however, specially interested

in the church at Shaftesbury, which he greatly helped by his wise counsel and munificent gifts, especially in connection with the enlargement of the manse. Mr. Alderman James White, one of the oldest and most respected inhabitants of the borough, which he has served as mayor, has for many years held the office of deacon, and, until quite recently, that of treasurer of the church. As far back as the memory of anybody connected with the place can go, he has been the most prominent figure in the congregation—a true minister's friend, and the helper and encourager of every good work. He has been specially the friend of young people, and remembers, with pardonable pride, some who, having come under his influence, have gone out into the world to do splendid service for the Master—among these the distinguished Wesleyan Minister, the Rev. Charles Garratt, has a foremost place. To Mr. White, and to others like him, this church, and all the churches, owe an unspeakable debt of gratitude.

In 1872, the Rev. C. T. Plank, from the Bristol Institute, became the minister, and on September 16th, 1875, at a meeting of the trustees, the minister and others interested, it was decided to convert the old British School into cottages and enlarge the Lecture-room, so as to adapt it for Sunday School purposes. On March 5th, 1876, Mr. Plank resigned, and removed to Tipping Street Church, Manchester. He is now minister of Halesowen, near Birmingham.

Rev. J. R. F. Ross came from Bere Regis in 1876, and removed to Fowey, after a three years' pastorate.

The Rev. J. W. Pointer, the present minister, who was then settled at Meare, Somerset, accepted the call of the church in 1879.

The story of this church is a story of struggle, often against overwhelming odds, from the first. It may give some idea of the forces arrayed against it to know that for many years any would-be tenant of a house or shop, who was known to be a Liberal and a Nonconformist, had no chance of being accepted.

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## SHERBORNE.

Most people who walk about the quiet, quaint town of Sherborne, with its irregular but clean and well-kept streets, and its general air of respectability and leisure, are prepared to endorse the opinion of its most recent historian, that it "is a gem among old-world towns." Begun to be built some twelve hundred years ago, it has never been visited by a great fire, and so what rebuilding has taken place has gone on gradually and piecemeal, and the original outline of the streets, formed when every man built where and how he pleased, has not been disturbed, and many ancient buildings, or fragments of buildings, remain. Few towns are richer in historic associations—associations of which the Shirburnians are naturally and properly proud. It is no part of our present business, however, to tell the general history of the place—what importance it had in the old times; how for some eighteen years it was the capital of England; how Alfred was probably a boy at school here where two of his brothers, who were Kings of England before him, lie buried; how here, long before Bede translated the Gospel of St. John at Jarrow, Aldhelm translated the Psalms into "the speech understood of the people;" how down to the days of Elizabeth it was the most important town in the county; how Sir Walter Raleigh lived here and how the proclamation of William of Orange to the English people was "Given at our Head Quarters at Sherborne Castle, 28th Nov., 1688." All this and much more must be left to other hands or to another occasion.

By far the most ancient and most interesting building in the town is the magnificent parish church, usually called the Abbey. Originally built by St. Aldhelm, who in 705 settled the bishoprick of West Wessex here, it has gone through many changes. It has been rebuilt and restored and improved until the merest scrap of the original building is left. For nearly five hundred years it was a cathedral. On the transfer of the bishoprick to Old Sarum, it became the Abbey of the Monastery, and so remained for another four hundred years. At the dissolution of the monastery it was

sold for £300 to Sir John Horsey, who re-sold it to the townspeople. From that time the splendid building, enriched with so much care and expense, with its thousand historical associations, has been the parish church. This building has special attractions for nonconformists, for it is almost certain that the first Presbyterian or Congregational church had its home in the grand old Abbey. It is the little-known story of this church that we now have to attempt to tell.

In the year 1632, Charles I., at the instance of Lord Digby, presented the Rev. Wm. Lyford, B.D., Fellow of Magdalene College, Oxford, to the vicarage of Sherborne. He was an eminently good man, earnest and zealous in his work. From the first he was a puritan, but, at the parting of the ways, when every man was compelled to choose on which side he would be, "upon the commencement of the civil war he espoused the cause of the Parliament," and Wood says "he joined the Presbyterians and was much followed for his edifying practical preaching." The times were stormy, and the storm broke furiously here in Sherborne, what time Fairfax battered down the Castle walls and took the place by storm, and Cromwell dealt with the clubmen; but Mr. Lyford, says Kennet, "took no active part in the public broils." But he did not minister to the people and advocate the Presbyterian form of church government for one and twenty years without effect. When he died in 1653 they did not wait for the Lord Protector or any other patron to select a minister for them, but availing themselves of the religious liberty of the times, proceeded to call one whose reputation was well-known to them, the Rev. Francis Bampfield, M.A., of Wadham College, Oxford, and Canon of Exeter, who had for some twelve years been rector of Rampisham, to be their minister. Their call came at an opportune time—perhaps they were aware that he was "moveable." But let him tell the story himself, "The people of the parish (Rampisham) refused to submit to church discipline, when his heart was set on reforming. Hereupon Providence gave him as large, full, clear a call to one of the most populous towns in all Dorsetshire . . . as any minister in England. After two years waiting by them, and referring the case to the



judgment of some Presbyterian ministers of other counties, besides the encouragement of the ministers of the same county, both Presbyterian and Independent, who approved, he had solemn entrance on his work." "On the day of his reception worship was performed by one Presbyterian and another Independent minister, and about two thousand were present."\*

Mr. Bampfield was one of the most remarkable men of his time—a time when remarkable men were not scarce. The son of Sir John Bampfield, Bart., of Poltimore, Devon, who represented Penryn in the Long Parliament, and brother of Thomas Bampfield, M.P. for Exeter in three successive Parliaments, and Speaker of Richard Cromwell's House of Commons, he belonged to an influential family. But it was not his family connections that distinguished him, but the purity and saintliness of his life ; his eagerness to know the truth and to follow it ; the strength of his convictions and the tenacity with which he held them. He left the university an Episcopalian and openly used the Prayer Book, after it was illegal to do so, longer than any other minister in Dorset. Through the influence of Baxter he changed his views on church government and the use of the Liturgy, becoming a strong Presbyterian. Hence he not only refused to use the Prayer Book, but desired to introduce church discipline into his parish, and the church organization, without which church discipline is impossible ; and cheerfully left the rich living of Rampisham, where his people refused to fall in with his views, for the then poor vicarage of Sherborne. Not that the diminished income could have made much difference to him personally, for being a bachelor and having a competency settled upon him by his father (£80 a year) he had spent every penny he received at Rampisham on the people "in giving them Bibles and other good books, setting the poor to work, relieving the necessities of those who could not work ; suffering not a beggar, knowingly, to be in his parish." One of his last acts before leaving had been to build a new rectory, which cost him £300. During his time the living of Sherborne was augmented (presumably by the Committee of the

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\* A Historical Declaration of the Life of Shem Acher.

County). The sum so received was paid to his curate, but finding that the augmentation ran in his name "I repaid every penny of it, for I never took one shilling of maintenance by such-like augmentations."\* In Sherborne there can be little doubt that he carried out his views as to church organization and discipline. In the seven years or so that he ministered in the Abbey he laboured with universal acceptance and great success, and with the co-operation of his curate, the Rev. H. Phillips, worked a "reformation in the town in general and was blessed to the conversion of many souls."† Mr. Bampfield "was the most celebrated preacher in the West of England, and even beyond measure admired by his hearers." Calamy says of him "Being in his conscience utterly dissatisfied with the conditions of conformity (contained in the Act of Uniformity) he took leave of his sorrowful congregation the Lord's-day before Bartholomew-day, 1662."

"In all the changes of the times, till now, every party was for having a man of such piety and learning kept in the ministry. Besides having had the approbation of the associated ministers of the Presbyterian and Congregational persuasion, the license of the Protector, and the testimony of the Triers of public preachers; besides having had ordination from two bishops of the Church of England, he had an authority and license for preaching, under the hands and seals of two kings, Charles I. and II. And it was very remarkable in him, that though he joined heartily in the reformation of the church, he was zealous against the parliament's war, and Oliver's usurpation; constantly asserting the royal cause under all changes, and even suffering for it. But he was so far from having any favour shown him on these accounts, that he suffered more for his Nonconformity than most other Dissenters.‡

In less than a month after he had vacated his living, his persecutions began. On September 19th, 1662, as he was expounding 1 Thess. v., 6, 7, to a congregation in his own house, the meeting was broken in upon by soldiers, who required him in the King's name to be silent. And one, T, an apothecary,

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\* A Just Appeal—continuation.

† Funeral Sermon for Rev. H. Phillips by his son-in-law.

‡ Calamy.

said he had a warrant to serve on Mr. Bampffield, and Mr. Phillips, his assistant, and ten of his principal hearers. "Thereupon, they took these two worthy ministers, and about twenty-five others, to the house of the Provost-marshal (the New Inn\*), where they all continued prisoners (except the two ministers who were separated from the others) in one room, which had but one bed in it, for five days and nights."† "On the Lord's-day, after one denial, Mr. Bampffield had leave to preach to the prisoners. Many of the town desired to be present, and some by giving the soldiers a fee got in, but were afterwards thrust out again. Some got into a back yard, but were threatened with writs for trespass, though his wife gave them leave, and satisfaction of ten times the value was offered. At night, Mr. Phillips had leave to preach, but while he was at prayer the soldiers broke in and prevented it. On the Wednesday following, four or five of the deputy-lieutenants met, and called Mr. Bampffield before them first, and then Mr. Phillips. Sir John Strode, of Parnham (Beaminster), was in the chair. Mr. Bampffield owned that he was worshipping God in his family, and that several neighbours came in. Nothing was charged, in the prayer or exposition, as being seditious; nevertheless, the Chairman declared the exercise tended to sedition, and required sureties for their good behaviour and appearance at the next assizes." This preliminary imprisonment was no joke. In those days prisoners had not only to provide their own food, but they had to hire their own furniture, and to pay all sorts of fees and exactions to their jailors. The expense to which they were put on this occasion, when the food supplied by their friends was kept back from them, seems to have made a distinct impression upon their minds. More than forty years after, it was mentioned in Mr. Phillips's Funeral Sermon, preached by his son-in-law and successor. How the ministers fared at the assizes does not appear. The probability is that the prosecution was dropped. When they understood that the good behaviour to which they had been bound over included an obligation not to preach, they openly renounced it, and went on with their work in Sherborne. This

\* Funeral Sermon for H. Phillips by John England, 1707.

† Calamy.

was only for a time, for the opposition was so bitter that they deemed it best to go to Mr. Thos. Bampfield's, at Dunkerton, near Bath, where they preached at first to a small number, which gradually increased.

Soon afterwards, Mr. Bampfield, undeterred by the prospect of trouble, and in conformity to his conviction that it was the duty of the ejected ministers to preach openly, attended a meeting at Shaftesbury,\* where he was arrested, with four other ministers, and thrown into Dorchester prison. One of them paid his fine of forty marks almost immediately, and was thereupon released. The others held out for periods varying from a year and a half to three years. But Mr. Bampfield was made of sterner stuff. He would not recognise, by the payment of the fine, the right of the civil magistrate to interfere with his liberty of preaching the gospel outside the Established Church. Calamy says that he remained in prison eight years; another authority makes it "nearly nine years."† This accounts for the fact that his name does not appear in a return, dated 1669, preserved in the Archbishop of Canterbury's Library at Lambeth. As we have had occasion to refer to this MS. many times, it may not be out of place to say a word or two about it. In the year 1665, the great Plague raged in London. Charles II. and the Court fled to Oxford, and there Parliament was called together. The clergy of the Established Church—the men who had been put into the livings, out of which the Nonconformists had been thrust by the Act of Uniformity—also fled from the plague-stricken city and thousands who were dying daily would have been deprived of all the consolations of religion if these Nonconformist ministers had not heroically stepped in and fearlessly supplied their places. At the very time that they were giving this proof of their devotion to the cause of religion and humanity, which has won the admiration of historians of every party, the Church party in Parliament were busy passing an Act variously known as the Oxford Act and the Five Mile Act. This Act forbids all Nonconformist ministers to come, or be within five miles of any corporate or market town, or any parish

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\* See p. 228.

† Dictionary of National Biography.



wherein they have been parson, or where they have preached in any Conventicle, on any pretence whatever. The object of the Act was to separate the ejected ministers from their friends and drive them out to starve. "And as if the judgments of Heaven upon this nation were not heavy enough, nor the legislature sufficiently severe, the bishops must throw their weight into the scale; for in the very midst of the plague, July 7th, 1665, Archbishop Sheldon sent orders to the several bishops of his province to return the names of all ejected Nonconformist ministers, with their places of abode, and manner of life."\* Many of the bishops obtained returns from each parish in their respective dioceses, which state whether any Conventicles (that is Nonconformist services) are held; if so, in what building; how many people attend; and by whom the services are conducted. This return, which is dated 1669, is preserved, as above stated, and from it we are able to trace the movements of many ministers, But nowhere is Mr. Bampfield mentioned. The fact is that he was safe under lock and key in Dorchester.

On his liberation he says he went about on preaching tours and did not settle down at Sherborne again. Mr. Bampfield had at least one romance in his life. He tells us† that when he and others were prisoners in Dorchester, a lady, whom he calls Gnezri-jah (God's helper), took pity on them, and visited and fed them, stinting herself to do so. The others were one by one set at liberty, but he remained, and she still continued her visits and ministrations. When Mr. Bampfield left the prison, the lady went with him to attend him as he went about preaching. As an almost inevitable consequence scandal made free with their names, whereupon he married her. This caused a breach between him and his relations, who looked upon it as little less than a crime that he should have married, and as they considered beneath him, and his servant, as they called her.

For some time we lose sight of him. He re-appears in the records of the city of Salisbury, where we read "1675, William Smith, mayor; on the 18th April he disturbed the meeting and put Mr. F. Bampfield, a nonconformist minister, into the town

\* Neal's Puritans iii., 146.

† Historical Declaration, 1681.



prison till the 4th Aug., and then released him for a fine of 20s. to the Bishop of Sarum.”\*

He afterwards went to London, where he preached privately for several years, and ultimately “gathered a congregation of Sabbatarian (Seventh day) Baptists at Pinner’s Hall, Broad Street. Whilst conducting service there in Feb., 1682-3, he was arrested and carried before the Lord Mayor. After several appearances at the Old Bailey Sessions Mr. Bampfield was convicted and returned to Newgate, where he died 16th Feb. 1683-4. Large crowds of sympathisers attended his funeral at the Anabaptists Burial Ground in Aldersgate Street.”† It has been the fashion to sneer at Mr. Bampfield on account of the many changes in his opinions. Wood, who rarely has anything but abuse for a nonconformist, says “he was first a Churchman, then a Presbyterian, an Independent, afterwards an Anabaptist, and at length almost a compleat Jew and what not”—words that have been quoted with approval by those who wished to under-value the man. That he frequently changed his views on questions of church government, &c., is true. But it is worth notice that everyone of the changes was against his worldly interest, and may therefore be reckoned sincere. His character and his sufferings have given him a place on the roll of fame denied to hundreds of his contemporaries who never changed, and while he is remembered they are forgotten.‡ This is the man, who together with his curate, laid the foundation of what is now the Congregational Church in Sherborne.

His curate, to whom the church owes even more than to Mr. Bampfield, was the Rev. Humphrey Phillips, M.A., of both universities, sometime Fellow of Magalen College, Oxford. He was born of a well-to-do family at Somerton. At the age of 24 he was ordained by Dr. Wild, Mr. Hickman and others “according to the Presbyterian way, that being the common way of ordaining at the time,” and began to preach in and about Oxford. The next year (1658) he became curate to Mr. Bampfield at Sherborne.

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\* Diocesan Hist. Salisbury.

† Dict. Natl. Biog.

‡ Edna Lyall “In the Golden Days” has a chapter headed “Francis Bampfield, saint.”

Two years later he was deprived of his fellowship because he would not submit to re-ordination at the hands of a bishop, and, as we have seen above, was ejected from Sherborne Abbey with Mr. Bampffield in 1662, and shared with him the persecutions above described for commencing services in private houses. The two friends having removed to Dunkerton, near Bath, where Mr. Bampffield's brother Thomas had an estate, they commenced services. When the Rev. F. Bampffield was arrested at Shaftesbury and cast into prison, Mr. Phillips carried on the work alone, as chaplain to Mr. T. Bampffield. Here he was seized and imprisoned in Ilchester gaol. After lying there for "eleven months he was brought from prison in the depth of winter, and a snowy time, to the assizes at Wells where he was put into a chamber, like Noah's Ark, full of all sorts of creatures, and laid in a bed . . . where the sheets were wet, and clung to his flesh. The justice who committed him gave him hard language; but the judge discharged him, he having satisfied the law."\* He did not immediately return to Dunkerton, but spent some time in Holland. On his return to England and to Dunkerton, he found that a change had come over the minds of his friends the Bampffields, who had the meanwhile adopted the opinions of the seventh-day Baptists, that is, that the Sabbath ought to be observed on the seventh day of the week (Saturday) and not, as is usual, on the first. This led to a separation, but not to any bitter feeling on his part. Henceforth he worked in association with other ministers, moving about among the Mendips, conducting services at Dunkerton, attended by 300, "at the sheep house of William Clement, † Sen. and Jun.;" at Cameley, attended by 200, where the Services were held "in the parish church;" at Weston by Bath, attended by 100, at the house of Thomas Hendon; at Glastonbury, where 300 attended "in a barn belonging to John Austin where a pulpit and seats are built." ‡ He was often in trouble and was much "vexed in the Bishops Court and was ex-communicated and a writ being out de Ex. Cap. this forced him for a time to leave his dwelling and wander up and down, having no certain abiding place; and whilst he was from home,

\* Calamy. † The Clements were relations of Mr. Phillips. ‡ Cod. Tenn.

there was a warrant out against him for £60, having been convicted of preaching at two meetings, the first offence being £20 and the second £40. Having survived these troubles another warrant of £20 fine was out against him for being at a meeting, which warrant was executed and the money paid.\* Upon King Charles' Indulgence in 1672, he returned to Sherborne and in June took out a license to be a Presbyterian teacher in the house of Catharine Chaffey, and Catharine Chaffey's house and also John Copton's were licensed for worship. In the same year (August) Francis Fords and (October 28th.) Elizabeth Cooth's houses were similarly licensed.† In this year the old meeting-house, capable it is said of seating 500 people, was built. But he was not allowed to remain long, for on the withdrawal of the Indulgence the next year he was driven away, and after several removes settled down at Beckington where he had an estate, and where he lived the rest of his days, preaching in many places, but especially at Frome, of which church he is regarded as the founder. "There be many," says his son-in-law, "in Sherborne and the places adjacent that have owned and will now to this day, that his preaching was a means of their conversion."\* He died March 27th, 1707, aged about 75.

The work begun by Mr. Bampffield and Mr. Phillips, revived by the latter in 1672, and laid down again so soon, appears to have been taken up by the Rev. Josiah Banger, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford. This gentleman was the son of the Rev. Bernard Banger, rector of Yarlington, Somerset, and was ejected by the Act of Uniformity from the vicarage of the little Devonshire village of Broad Hembury, made famous a hundred years later as the home of Toplady the hymn writer. He then removed to Montacute, where he preached with much success for several years. Among his hearers there was the wife of a local magistrate who was so incensed at the fact, that he caused him to be imprisoned in Ilchester gaol under the Five Mile Act. On his release he appears to have come to reside at Lillington, a village two miles south of Sherborne, where he had an estate that remained in the possession of his family until the beginning of the

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\* Funeral Sermon by John England. † State Papers, Dom. 1672.

present century. At Lillington he commenced services which were held every Sunday, and attracted attendants from far and near—probably a good many people walked over thither from Sherborne, when Messrs. Bampffield and Phillips had been driven out of the town. The account in the return above referred to is that the services were attended by “300 people or above,” which must have been many times the entire population of the village. He also preached occasionally at Hermitage and at North Cheriton, “at the house of Edward Sutton,” where he had 200 hearers.\* When Mr. Phillips was driven from Sherborne in 1673, it appears that Mr. Banger took his place, and possibly his local connections saved him from some of the persecution that had raged against his predecessor. He was an earnest, evangelical preacher. One of his sermons “A Serious Call to Secure Sinners” was published in 1676.

During the time he was minister here the dissenters of the West of England, goaded by years of bitter persecution and fears that with a Roman Catholic King on the throne popery would be re-established, joined the ill-fated rising under the Duke of Monmouth, sometimes called the Dissenters’ Rebellion. It is not unlikely that some of the men from the church at Sherborne fought on the Duke’s side at Sedgmoor (1685). Among those sentenced to death by Jeffries at the Bloody Assizes and executed, Samuel Glisson, Richard Hall, John Savage and nine others were hung, drawn and quartered at Sherborne.† But Mr. Banger lived long enough to see the cause defeated at Sedgmoor triumphant. In 1688 William of Orange came, James II. fled unregretted, and liberty of worship was granted to the dissenters by the Toleration Act. He did not, however, long enjoy the liberty thus won, for he died in August, 1691, aged 64, and was buried in Lillington churchyard, where his high tomb may still be seen.

It is impossible to say exactly when the next minister, the Rev. John England, entered upon the duties of his office. When Mr. Banger died the cause was in a flourishing condition, the congregation was numerous and respectable, so numerous that though the building was large, the aisles were filled, and people were glad

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\* Cod. Tenn.

† See pages 147-8.



to bring their camp stools to secure a sitting there; and the town was in a prosperous condition owing to a flourishing linen-button manufacture, for which the manufacturers had a patent. There was no reason why the pulpit should be vacant, so that we may conclude that the new minister came soon after the old one died—probably in 1692 or 1693. Mr. England, who was the son-in-law of Mr. Phillips, had a considerable reputation as a preacher. His published works show him to have been a keen and eager controversialist. Among his printed sermons there is one that gives us a rare glance of one of the members of the congregation. It is a funeral sermon preached May 6, 1713, for Mr. John Derby, described as “the late Receiver-General of the County of Dorset.” Of him the preacher says “he was a very useful and desirable member of this Society, and not only an ornament, but a main pillar and support of it. He made conscience of closet duty. He constantly kept up family worship, by reading prayers and singing of Psalms, which last duty is almost banished from christian households. In the house of God he maintained a reverent deportment . . . no sitting in time of prayer (our fathers stood during prayer) no sleeping in time of sermon. When he lived in different times he cheerfully walked many miles, no weather preventing him, to hear the word preached. And since a lecture was set up in this town, which owes its being chiefly to him, he constantly attended when able and sometimes when he was scarce able. . . . Though he sustained many losses, and some very considerable, he was never observed to fret or murmur, or was thereby tempted to neglect his duty. . . . He made all things easy for the congregation, taking the burden on himself.” For many years the Derby family were prominent in every work connected with the church. In Mr. England’s time the meeting-house, and the minister’s house, which adjoined one another in Newland, “bounded on the north side by the Quaker’s meeting-house and burying-ground,” were conveyed to trustees by Mary Keynes, widow (1709), and the chapel field in Acreman-street, then called Whetcombe’s Close, was conveyed to trustees by Miss Sarah Dampier, “upon trust to permit and suffer the minister of the congregation of Presbyterian Protestant Dissenters meeting in Sherborne for the time being for ever to



receive and take to his own use the rents and profits, as and in part of recompense for his pains in preaching the gospel there" (1705). And in 1723 Miss Mary Kelsby presented to the church the silver communion cups, which are still in use. During the latter part of his life Mr. England was assisted by his son, the Rev. John England, jun., who had been for some years previously minister of the church at Glastonbury. The father died March 13, 1724, leaving a widow and several children. For a short time the son continued to supply the pulpit, but ultimately removed to Beaminster, where he died June 11th, 1735, aged 37, and was buried in Sherborne Church. His son, John England, M.D., resided at Blandford, and his grandson was the Rev. Wm. England, rector of Stafford, near Dorchester and Archdeacon of Dorset. While the Englands were in charge of the church at Sherborne the button patent was rescinded, and the industry declined and eventually disappeared. This was a serious blow to the town, causing the population to decrease. But such was the influence of their ministry, that the congregation was well-maintained as long as they lived.

The church had now been in existence for seventy years, and from small beginnings in private houses had gradually but surely grown into a large and influential community, having associated with it many of the most considerable families in the neighbourhood. The story of the next seventy years is the story of almost all the Presbyterian churches in the West of England, a story of decline and decay owing to the Arian and eventually Unitarian sentiments of the successive ministers. The Rev. William Prior, who was educated for the ministry under Mr. Hallett of Exeter, and had previously settled elsewhere, was the next minister. "He possessed very considerable talents, particularly as a preacher, but in doctrinal sentiments he deviated from the reputed standard of orthodoxy, though he was never very wide in sentiment." He acquired some fame by a charge he delivered at the ordination of four ministers at Bridport \* in 1738, which was published and obtained for him the degree of D.D., and also prepared the way for his removal to London in 1742, where he became minister of

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\* See page 98.

Great Alie Street, Goodman's Fields, and one of the lecturers at Salter's Hall, and there he remained until his death in 1774. The congregation did not decline to any considerable extent during Mr. Prior's pastorate; it did, however, cease to grow. There were still, however, many able and generous friends connected with the place. One of these Miss Mary Kelsby, or Kilsbey, the same who gave the communion cups, created by her will, dated Nov. 1st, 1734, a rent-charge of £5 a year on a house now owned by, and late in the occupation of Mr. Dalwood, in Cheap Street, which is to be distributed by the minister in half-crowns to poor members of the congregation; blind people, however, are to have five shillings each. The latter provision was no doubt due to the fact that Miss Kelsby, who was a relation of the Derbies, lost her sight when she was only nine years old. One Valentine Wayfield about the same time left a rent-charge on a field called Tanner's Field, of thirty shillings a year to be paid to the minister. Mr. Prior was succeeded by Rev. William Cornish, who had been educated under Mr. Grove at Taunton, and was afterwards colleague of Mr. Grove in the pastorate of Bishop's Hull, near Taunton, where he was ordained along with Dr. Amory, Oct. 7th, 1730, and settled at Sherborne 1744. He was a more pronounced Arian than his predecessor, and his settlement seems to have destroyed the last link binding a number of earnest Evangelical members to the meeting house, which they left, and joining with a few like-minded people at Milborne Port established an Independant church there, to which they walked over on Sundays. Mr. Cornish remained in Sherborne until his death in 1763. Under his ministry the congregation so far fell away that the meeting-house was reduced to nearly half its former size, and yet was too large for the congregation. This was largely due, no doubt, to a more general and total secession of the Evangelical portion of the people, which took place in 1753. It was a time of a great spiritual awakening, Whitfield and Wesley were at the height of heir fame and power. Besides the Evangelists already named, there were others who took a splendid part in the work. Among these was the Rev. Risdon Darracott,

the minister of the Presbyterian church at Wellington, Somerset, styled "The Star of the West," whose services were eagerly sought after far and wide, and whose ministry was blessed with a harvest of souls for Christ. In this year 1753, Mr. Darracott happened to be on a visit to Sherborne, and was the guest of Mr. Benjamin Vowell, an influential member of the congregation. Mr. Cornish was thereupon asked to allow Mr. Darracott to preach in his pulpit, and refused. This was the last straw, and the long-suffering people, who had never been satisfied with the mild morality of Mr. Cornish's preaching, withdrew and commenced services in private houses. To put themselves right with the law, five of them, Mr. Benjamin Whitehead, Mr. William Russell, and Messrs. Samuel, Benjamin and Thomas Vowell licensed their houses as places of worship, July 16th, 1754. In one or other of these houses "they met every Lord's Day evening for prayer and reading a sermon, and enjoyed in the week the services of such ministers as could visit them."\* "In the year 1756, having purchased a suitable piece of ground on the south side of Long Street" (now occupied by a store connected with Mr. Baxter's brewery) "there was erected, principally at the expense of Messrs. Thomas Vowell, Benjamin Vowell, and Benjamin Whitehead, a small place of worship without galleries or enclosed seats which was (licensed July 13th, and) opened by the Rev. Mr. Gardiner of Wilton, Oct. 10th, 1756 . . . they were supplied afterwards by various others until Feb. 6th, 1757, when the Rev. Daniel Varder preached his first sermon. At the opening of this place, and some little time afterwards there was a considerable degree of opposition. But this, as is usual in such cases, rather tended to make the people more zealous, and unite them more closely together, while a gentleman in the town, in the Commission of the Peace, George Hutchings, Esq., kindly interfered and exerted his authority to protect them from all insult and interruption when conducting the worship of God."\* There was now no reason why any of the residents in Sherborne should go to Milborne Port to hear the gospel. They accordingly withdrew their membership and cast in their lot, glad of the opportunity,

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\* Minute Book, Prefatory Account, by B. Chandler, Esq., 1823.

with their brethren in Long Street. A Congregational church was formed June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1757, when the following brief but comprehensive Covenant was entered into and signed by Daniel Varder, minister, William Granger and Benjamin Whitehead, deacons, and the other members.

We, whose names are underwritten, solemnly give up ourselves to the Lord and to one another, according to the will of God, to walk in all his ordinances and commandments, to watch over, exhort, reprove, and submit ourselves to one another in the fear of God. These things we declare in the name of Christ.

Mr. Varder had had a remarkable Christian experience. In early life he was a working smith at a village a mile from Wellington, Somerset, and for some time after his marriage was notorious for his wickedness, being the ringleader in all manner of riotous practices, half starving his wife and children by his laziness and extravagance. One Sunday as he was lying listlessly on the ground sudden conviction darted into his mind, which, though he tried, he was unable to shake off. Hearing of Mr. Darracott he went to hear him preach, and under his ministry became an entirely changed man. Mr. Varder was a man of considerable natural talent, undissembled piety, remarkable humility and uncommon fluency and fervency. After a time he was enabled to enter Mr. Lavington's Academy at Ottery St. Mary, and on the completion of his studies settled first for a very short time at Cerne, and then at Sherborne, where he was ordained Oct. 6th, 1757. Here he remained a faithful and affectionate pastor, honoured by his Divine Master with great and increasing success, until April 8th, 1764, when he preached his last sermon. He died in Bristol July 30th of that year, as the result of an operation for the stone. In addition to preaching in the little bare Chapel in Long Street, Mr. Varder commenced services in private houses at Haydon and Beer Hacket.

There were now, as we have seen above, two Nonconformist churches in Sherborne, one nominally Presbyterian, the other Congregational, though both were really Congregational. The Presbyterian, or Newland Church, had a good chapel, a splendid record, some endowment, and a following of well-to-do people.



The Congregational, or Long Street Church, was small, poor, despised and persecuted. It had a bare little chapel without seats, and no endowment. In the struggle for existence it seemed as if the old church must eventually outlive the new one. But there was a difference not included in the above statement. In the one place a cold Christless morality was preached; in the other the great theme was Christ the Son of God, crucified for the sins of man. The difference of doctrine more than compensated for the outward advantages, as the story of the next forty years abundantly proves.

In the year that Mr. Varder died (1764), the Rev. Samuel Thomas became minister of the Newland Church. He had been educated at the Carmarthen College, and had been settled at Dulverton for one year previous to coming here. "He is described as a fine specimen of the ancient Presbyterian school—a dignified yet affectionate preacher, and a true pastor of his flock—a zealous assertor of Christian liberty—pious, learned, indefatigable."\* But he was an Arian, and the congregation continued to decrease. He removed, becoming minister of Frenchay, a village about four miles from Bristol, in Aug. 1772, where he continued until 1803, when he retired, and died, "full of years and honours," at Hambrook, April 1807. "For many years he kept a large and respectable school at Hambrook, a small village near Frenchay, where he had the care of two sons of Dr. Priestley."† During his pastorate the endowment was further increased. On Aug. 26th, 1765, Mary Longman, widow, conveyed a rent-charge of two guineas a year, secured on the Castle Tavern, Long Street, (which is no longer a tavern, but a house and shop occupied by Mr. Brine) "for the support of Samuel Thomas and his successors in office."

Mr. Thomas was succeeded in 1772 by the Rev. William Evans, uncle of the minister of the same name who settled at Tavistock in 1772, where he sustained the office of minister for seventy-three years. Our Mr. Evans was educated at the Carmarthen College, and while still a student published an English-  
Welsh Dictionary which passed through several editions. He

\* Murch's Western Churches, p. 50.

† Murch.



departed more completely from the orthodox faith than any of his predecessors, and became an avowed Unitarian. He removed to Moreton Hampstead March, 1776, and is supposed to have died there the same year.\*

The next minister of the Newland church was the Rev. John Barrett, also from the Carmarthen College. His first charge was at South Molton. Settling in Sherborne in 1776 he shortly afterwards married Miss Busey, and removed the next year to Bristol, preaching in the neighbouring village of Cathay, where he was living in 1781.†

We have no information of any minister being appointed to succeed Mr. Barrett for some years. It would appear that the Rev. Joseph Chadwick, who had received his early education under Mr. Kirkup, at South Petherton, and his education for the ministry under Mr. Rooker, at Bridport, settled at Sherborne in 1785, and left in 1790. All that the writer has been able to find out about him is as above, except that he married a Miss Kirby, of Bristol, and was living in the minister's house adjoining the chapel in Newland in January, 1790.‡

The last minister of the old chapel in Newland was the Rev. Roger Ward, a native of Walmesley, Lancashire, who came from the Academy at Daventry, 1790, removing to Blackburn, in his native county, in 1791 or 1792. In 1798 he became master of the "Grammar School at Kidderminster, which he conducted with credit to himself as a man of learning, and was also for sixteen years minister of a small congregation at Bromsgrove. He died at Stourport, aged 60."§

We must now retrace our steps and take up the story of the Long Street Chapel after Mr. Varder's death. "The Rev. John Lewis, a member of the church at Warminster, who had received his education at Ottery, having supplied the pulpit and proving acceptable to the people, was called to the pastorate January 6, 1765," and was ordained Sept. 4th following. He married Miss Whitehead, daughter of one of his deacons, and was the father

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\* Carmarthen College Records. † Walter Wilson MS.

‡ Deed conveying chapel and house from Rev. W. England to trustees.

§ Monthly Rep. xx. 498.

of Rev. John Lewis, of Wareham. Twenty nine were added to the church during Mr. Lewis's ministry. He left for Broadway in June, 1777, and was afterwards minister of Ringwood, and then of Mere, where he died. One of Mr. Lewis' grandsons, Mr. T. R. Lewis, solicitor, was resident in the town, and took an active part in connection with the building of Union Chapel, in 1803.

"The Rev. Herbert Mends, son of the Rev. C. Mends, of Plymouth, who had just completed his studies under Mr. Rooker, of Bridport, almost immediately supplied the vacant pulpit, and towards the close of the year was invited to take the office of pastor." The call was signed by twenty members and thirty-three subscribers. Mr. Mends was ordained July 8th, 1778. "Though not altogether without seals to his ministry, he was not honoured with particular usefulness in Sherborne, and in 1782, in consequence of his father's increasing infirmities, he was invited by the church at Batter Street, Plymouth, to take the office of co-pastor, which he accepted. He died January 8th, 1819," after thirty-seven years ministry in Plymouth, during which period the church greatly increased.

The vacant pulpit was supplied for some months by Mr. Thorowgood, afterwards minister of Basingstoke, and then by the Rev. Geo. Harvey, who had been a student at Homerton, to whom a call was given in 1783. A letter copied in the minutes shows that though the spiritual state of the church was unsatisfactory, the congregation numbered about two hundred at each service on Sunday. These services were held morning and afternoon only. It was during Mr. Harvey's ministry that a Mr. John Hyatt was attracted to the services, and soon after his conversion abandoned a prosperous business to become minister of Mere, and afterwards colleague of the eccentric Rev. Matthew Wilks at Tottenham Court Chapel and the Tabernacle.\* Mr. Harvey left under a cloud, the exact nature of which does not transpire, in 1798. Probably it was in some way connected with his domestic circumstances, for one authority says that he married a Miss Brett, from whom he was for a time

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\* Bennet's History of Dissenters, p. 520.

separated, though they came together again and went to London where they kept a school.\*

We have now come to a period when the old meeting-house in Newland was without a minister. As shown above Mr. Ward left in 1791 or 1792. The congregation at that time appears to have been very small, shortly afterwards the premises, which were now nearly a hundred and thirty years old, were described as so dilapidated as to be dangerous and that the morning lecture or service "was from necessity discontinued at this place." It would appear that the members of the old church (who never embraced the Unitarian doctrines of their later ministers) anxious that the services should be continued, arranged to hold the morning service in the Long Street Chapel, appointing Mr. Harvey their lecturer or preacher, for which they paid him twenty pounds a year † (about the amount of the endowment). Very welcome this addition to the minister's income must have been, for the salary, which was £45 in 1776 (the first recorded) though it had gradually crept up was only £66 in 1798. This arrangement, at first tentative and temporary, led to a closer and permanent union soon after.

In the good providence of God the Long Street Church had its attention directed to the Rev. James Weston, minister of Corsham, Wilts. Before communicating with Mr. Weston or inviting him to visit Sherborne, a deputation consisting of three members of the church was sent to spend a Sunday at Corsham. The text of the first sermon they heard there was, singularly enough, "The elders obtained a good report." Mr. Weston subsequently preached in Sherborne and was unanimously called to the pastorate, which he entered upon in June, 1800. He was a native of Bristol, educated for the ministry under Dr. Bogue, at Gosport, to whom he was introduced by the celebrated Rev. Matthew Wilks and was "placed in easy and (in reference to his habits) affluent circumstances." In personal appearance he was tall, and extremely dignified. The

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\* Walter Wilson, M.S.,

† "1799. To cash of Mr. Scott for morning lecture of old meeting, three quarters and half, Mr. Harvey having received half quarter," Long Street Chapel Accounts.

time of his coming to Sherborne was what has been called the strategic moment. Everything was favourable to a forward movement on the part of the church, which, after sixty years of division, appeared likely to be permanently and happily united. The hour was propitious, all depended upon the man. Mr. Weston was a man exactly suited to the occasion. From the time of his settlement everything went on happily. The arrangement whereby the members of the old meeting worshipped at Long Street was continued, and the preaching and personality of the new minister attracted fresh worshippers. This placed the people in a curious difficulty. They had two chapels, but neither of them answered their purpose. The old one in Newland was large enough, but it was almost falling down. The other in Long Street was too small to accommodate the increasing congregation. It was thereupon decided to abandon both the chapels and to build an entirely new chapel, uniting both trusts and retaining as far as possible the old trustees. A house on the north side of Long Street was bought from S. Pretor, Esq., for £300 in 1802, and at the north end of the garden belonging to this house a chapel was built, called in commemoration of the event "Union Chapel." It was fifty feet long and forty feet wide, with a gallery at one end only, and was opened Nov. 14th, 1804. In 1814 side galleries were added. In 1816 the house in Long Street in front of the chapel was demolished and the iron rails and gates erected. The congregation still increasing the chapel was lengthened by the addition of twenty-one feet in 1821, when the roof, which was found too low, was raised and the present handsome front erected. The organ gallery was put in in 1824. The whole cost was as follows:—

				£	s.	d.
Land and Building, 1803	...	...	...	1680	19	1
Side Galleries, 1814	...	...	..	172	11	1
Iron Railings, &c., 1816	...	...	...	118	1	5
Enlargement, 1821	..	...	...	1083	3	9
Organ Gallery, 1824	...	...	...	135	10	6
Total				£3190	5	10



Of this sum £212 was provided by the sale of the old chapel and minister's house in Newland; £123 by the sale of the minister's house in Long Street; £85 15s. 9d. by the sale of £160, 3 per cent. Consols, belonging to the Long Street congregation; \* and £82 by dividends and rents. The balance was provided by subscription, and the amount sufficiently testifies to the size, ability and enthusiasm of the congregation. The old chapel in Long Street was turned into a school and so used for many years.

Of all the ministers of the Congregational church in Sherborne, Mr. Weston was the ablest and most successful. Writing after eighteen years' ministry he says: "We can truly say (and do say it with gratitude) during that period there has not been one hour's disagreement between the church and its pastor, nor do I recollect one unpleasant word in this relation." This says much, not only for the minister, but for those who were associated with him, stalwarts like Samuel Whitty, the banker; Samuel, Thomas and John Blake; Joseph and William Dodge; Samuel Scott, to whose memory there is a marble tablet in the chapel; John Gray, the good physician; Benjamin Vowell, the friend and benefactor of the poor †; T. V. Meech, for many years superintendent of the Sunday school; B. C. Porter, who commenced a service at Holwell, and two of whose sons, Edward and William, became missionaries to India; and Benjamin Chandler, Mr. Whitty's son-in-law and successor at the Sherborne Old Bank, who for many years conducted the afternoon service; about every one of whom, and many more, much might be written. They were men of whom any minister might well be proud, and to them as well as to him some of the remarkable prosperity of the church in the first quarter of this century must be ascribed.

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\* "Various sums left to the Dissenting Interest, Long Street, Sherborne: £30 by Mr. Andrews, £20 by Mr. William Andrews, £30 by a private hand. These, with £4 4s. raised by subscription, were bought into 3 per cent, consols at 55½, February 10th, 1785." Long Street Account Book.

† Benjamin Vowell, by his will dated 1829, left £1000 Consols, one half of the income of which was to be paid to the vicar and churchwardens of Sherborne, and the other half to the minister and two senior deacons of Long Street chapel, to be distributed in coats, cloaks and blankets amongst the poor.



Mr. Weston died May 27th, 1823,\* and was followed to his grave by the representatives of every body of Christians in the town, and by upwards of four hundred persons, members of the congregation or of the most respectable families in the town and neighbourhood, the great bell of the Abbey tolling until the procession entered the chapel. His ministry was blessed to the conversion of many. Year by year the membership of the church increased, until it numbered upwards of 100 members, and the income of the place steadily improved. The church that before Mr. Weston came could with difficulty give his predecessor £65 a year, could now easily pay him three times that amount. The activities of the Church were also increased. A chapel was built at Sandford Orcas, and services held at Holwell and Lillington. Mr. Weston, notwithstanding his success, had some troubles. An entry in the accounts of the church which, it may be noted in passing, were beautifully kept for a hundred years, indicates one of them. Under date 1820, we read: "Rev. J. Weston's expenses attending at Shaftesbury Sessions, with Thos. Trimlett to prosecute Charles Lockyer for disturbing the congregation on a Sabbath morning, £3 16s." Many of the 150 persons who entered the church under his ministry became ministers or missionaries themselves. One or two may be mentioned: Joseph Corp, who became pastor of the church at Bridgwater, and built the original chapel there. "He was a man of apostolic spirit and extraordinary energy; his ministry was greatly blessed; the whole neighbourhood felt his influence." Thomas Chaffey; William Coombs, minister at Bradford; John Everett Good, of Salisbury; T. R. Carey; and the Rev. Robert Collins, the oldest Congregational minister now living, born in 1802, and admitted to the church in September, 1820. He now lives in well-earned retirement at Norwood and is able to walk to service every Sunday.†

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\* He left two daughters, who married and lived at Chard, and were true and sympathising friends of the successive pastors of the Congregational church there.

† For account of his life and portrait see "Quiver," August, 1897. To these names may be added the following: Elizabeth Dodge married Rev. Mr. Gibbon; Miss Porter married Rev. T. Denny, Mere; M. Ann Andrews married Henry Bicknell (of Compton) missionary to Tahiti.

It may be added that it was during Mr. Weston's ministry that the Wesleyan body commenced services in the town. The late Mr. William Dingley, the honoured founder of the Wesleyan Church in Sherborne, told the writer that on his coming to live here he was at first inclined to cast in his lot with the Long Street congregation ; but, finding the place was so full that it was difficult to obtain a seat, he felt that he could be more useful elsewhere, and so was led to the erection of a Wesleyan chapel.

On February 10th, 1824, a unanimous invitation was given the Rev. Moses Caston, of Newport, Isle of Wight, to succeed Mr. Weston, which he accepted, and commenced his ministry July 11th. The congregation fell away during the next few years and on December 19th, 1830, Mr. Caston preached his farewell sermon and "terminated a connection which, at its commencement, was full of promise, but in which neither party realized the pleasing anticipations they had formed." About forty new members were received during Mr. Caston's ministry, among them we find the name of William Roberts, who was later on to prove exceedingly useful in the Sunday school and in carrying on the services at Compton.\* Mr. Caston was afterwards minister of Penryn and spent his later years in Bristol, where he died in 1878. He published a "History of Independency in Bristol," 1860.

After the pulpit had been vacant a year, the Rev. John Hoxley, who had just completed his studies at Highbury College, was invited to become the minister. He entered upon the duties of his office February 26th, 1832, and was ordained September 6th. He remained here for upwards of fourteen years and on June 10th, 1846, resigned the charge. In his letter of resignation he says: "You are doubtless all aware that circumstances have recently occurred which render my continuance among you undesirable." What these circumstances were is nowhere stated. All that the records show is that there was about this time a not very serious decline in the income of the place, indicating a lack of enthusiasm. There is, however, a tradition among the older people that Mr. Hoxley paid an

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\* See p. 102.

amount of attention to the humbler members of his flock, which was not approved by others. He afterwards settled at Honiton, where he remained fifteen years and then went abroad, dying at Caen, in Normandy, December 28th, 1879.

The next minister was the Rev. J. Hamilton Davies, B.A., who, after having occupied the pulpit for four months, was called to the pastorate January 23rd, 1848. Mr. Davies was a man of very conspicuous ability, both as a preacher and writer. His "Life and Times of Richard Baxter" obtained a large circulation and is still esteemed as a work of reference. But he was too dictatorial, too confident in his own judgment, and too impatient of the judgment of others to work happily as a Congregational minister. "After many uncomfortable circumstances," writes his successor, which had greatly enfeebled both church and congregation, the Rev. J. H. Davies removed to Leamington, March, 1853." He shortly afterwards conformed to the Established Church, and died Canon of Worcester a very few years ago. In the midst of these "uncomfortable circumstances," and when it was feared that the congregation would be once more divided—in 1851—a number of the principal members bought a house and garden immediately adjoining the chapel yard and built on the site the present handsome Gothic school-room, at a cost of £1,100,\* with the double purpose of providing a Sunday school-room if the church remained undivided, and a place in which they and others likeminded could worship if their worst fears were realized. Happily there has never been any occasion to use it for the latter purpose; and, by a union of the trusts, separate use is now impossible.†

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\* In this room there was held for some time a night-school; which those who attended it are never likely to forget. It was conducted by Macready the famous actor, who, on retiring from the stage, took up his residence in Sherborne. At the conclusion of every session he requested each of the men present to stand around the room, everyone with a Bible in his hand, and then got them to read verse by verse the Sermon on the Mount. This he called his Litany. It may be added that as a protest against the prevailing bigotry against Dissenters, he used the Congregational school and attended the Wesleyan Chapel.

† By her will, dated May 31st, 1849, Miss Grace Downing Scott, daughter of Mr. S. Scott, mentioned above, left £100, the income of which is to be distributed by the minister "amongst poor persons of the congregation in sums not exceeding four shillings each, except to such as may be afflicted with blindness (as Miss Scott herself was) who are to receive eight shilling each." This is now represented by £110 15s. 3d. invested in consols.

In September, 1853, the Rev. John Tyndale, who had retired from Oxford some time previously, having been disabled by an accident which threatened entire prostration, occupied the pulpit and was requested to continue his services for six months longer, thus allowing an opportunity for testing his partially restored strength. This led to his being asked to remain as pastor for one year, May 17th, 1854, which he did ; but, in consequence of his strength proving quite unequal to the strain of pastoral work, the invitation was not renewed at the end of the year. He did not survive long, dying July 19, 1856, and is buried in front of the chapel. But his work was not in vain, for it is recorded that "by his judicious council he was the means of allaying much of the irritation that had prevailed among us, and causing a better and more harmonious feeling to exist." "Blessed are the peacemakers."

No story of the church at Sherborne would be complete which did not give some account of an important and successful effort made to secure liberty of conscience for the children of Dissenters in the great School of the town, originally called the King's School but now designated Sherborne School. As far back as 1723 a Petition was presented to Lord Chancellor Macclesfield, the visitor of this Royal foundation, by 78 Protestant Dissenters, inhabitants of Sherborne, complaining of the Statutes (or rules of the school) which rendered attendance by the scholars at divine service in the parish church compulsory, and required that the elder scholars should be instructed in the sacraments of the church, and attend Communion, or be expelled from the school, and which in effect excluded the children of Dissenters from the school. Upon this Petition the Lord Chancellor, as visitor, ordered on the 6th Aug., 1723, that

"When the scholars should assemble in the School in order to their going to Church according to the Statutes, and the parent of any scholar amongst them should desire his child or children to go to any meeting (that is Nonconformist place of worship) "allowed by law, the Master of the School should be at liberty to give leave to such child or children to go to such meeting accordingly."

This order seems to have in subsequent years been lost sight



of, and the Governors of the School, regarding it as an exclusively Church of England institution, when framing a set of new Statutes in 1851 made it imperative for all scholars to be taught the Catechism and to attend Church. Thereupon the Nonconformists of the town presented to the governors a letter praying for "the removal of all restrictions which prevent Dissenters from conscientiously availing themselves of every benefit conferred upon the inhabitants of the town by King Edward's foundation." The governors, however, declined to alter the Statutes, whereupon the late Mr. B. Chandler brought an action against the governors in the Court of Chancery complaining of the following matters contained in the Statutes of 1851 :

1. The compulsory use of prayers in the School, which are specified in the ordinances, and which imply or assert doctrines disapproved of more or less by various classes of Dissenters.
2. The compulsory attendance of scholars at Church.
3. The religious instruction which all the scholars are compelled to receive, which includes learning the Catechism of the Church of England and other doctrines of the Church.
4. The fact that exhibitions and pecuniary rewards and distinctions are to be conferred exclusively on persons going to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.\*

The Master of the Rolls (Sir John Romilly) before whom the case was tried, held that effect must still be given to the judgment of Lord Macclesfield, and that the four rules set forth were more exclusive than was required. Sir John Romilly further decided that until a petition had first (as in 1723) been presented to the Lord Chancellor, as visitor, asking for the relief then claimed in the action he (Sir John Romilly) had no jurisdiction.

A Petition was accordingly presented to the Lord Chancellor (Lord Cranworth) as visitor, to recover for the children of Dissenters their ancient privileges in matters of religion. At his lordship's suggestion, the governors of the School voluntarily added to the Statutes a conscience clause dispensing with attendance at Church, and with learning of the Church of England Catechism† by "the children of persons conscientiously

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\* Then practically closed to Dissenters.

† 24 Law Journal (Chancery) Reports, p. 74.



dissenting from the doctrine or discipline of the Church of England."

Thus this champion of liberty secured rights not only for himself and his own denomination, but for Dissenters of every name, not only in the town of Sherborne but throughout the country, as it is well known that King Edward VI. granted many Charters for Grammar Schools, most of which are formed on the lines of the Charter granted to the King's School at Sherborne.

In December, 1855, the Rev. Frederick Beckley, of Margate, was called to be the minister, and entered upon his work here in April. Born at Cheriton, Wilts, and educated at the Cotton End Academy, "he settled at Margate in 1847, and succeeded in forming a church, which flourished under him, and has continued to prosper and enlarge up to the present time."\* Mr. Beckley found the church at Sherborne considerably weakened and disorganised, in consequence of the trying ordeal through which it had passed during the previous quarter of a century, though it is wonderful how the people had held together, and maintained the income of the place. There was, however, a fine opening for a good minister, and such Mr. Beckley proved himself to be. He was an effective preacher, and had a peculiar gift in prayer, and his attractive preaching and genial personality speedily drew a larger congregation together. "He soon became known as one of the most useful and popular ministers in the county of Dorset." He was very happy in his church officers. Among them, as specially worthy of note, one or two may be mentioned. Mr. Richard Worsley, who for nine years acted as Deacon, Treasurer and Secretary of the church, and conducted the afternoon service until its discontinuance (1866) in favour of the Sunday School work, which, in the new premises, had become so large as to need all the energies of the people to be devoted to it. He soon afterwards removed to Reading, where he still lives, honoured and beloved. Another helper was Mr. B. Chandler, mentioned above, for many years the zealous and indefatigable Treasurer of the church, who never grudged time or trouble devoted to its service, and transacted all its legal business without payment, and

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\* Biog. Cong. Year Book, 1890.

often without acknowledgment. He was one of the most prominent men in the town, having been for many years Chairman of the Local Board of Health. A third pillar of the church was Dr. Williams, who was called to the office of Deacon in 1857—an office he held and used well until the day of his death.\*

The latter years of Mr. Beckley's ministry were marked by a considerable change coming over the congregation. Several families which had been associated with the place for generations, either removed, died out, or were greatly diminished by removals and death, and the people, accustomed, as in Mr. England's time, to lean upon those who, like Mr. Derby, "made all things easy for the congregation, taking the burden on themselves," were more inclined to lament their loss than to brace themselves to fill their places. It was a time of transition from an aristocratic to a democratic period, and like all times of transition, had its peculiar difficulties. Somewhat discouraged, he resigned the charge, and removed to the Vineyard's Chapel, Bath, in March, 1878. Here he continued five years, until ailing health compelled him to seek rest. After resting for a year or two, he was so far restored as to be able to accept a call from the Congregational Church in the beautiful village of Upwey, near Weymouth, where he laboured for nearly four years, thus spending twenty-seven years of his active ministerial life in the county of Dorset. During this period he was twice elected President of the County Association, and was held in high esteem by his brother ministers. Mr. Beckley lived at Weymouth during the time he was pastor at Upwey, and here he continued to reside up to his death, which took place May 27th, 1889, at the age of 68. His memory is still green in Sherborne.

During Mr Beckley's pastorate the vitality of the church and the success of his ministry was attested by several important changes. In 1858 the convenient lecture-room behind the chapel was built at a cost of £150. Later a new organ was substituted for the old and inferior instrument. And in 1862 the

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\* By her will Miss A. S. Scott, who died 29th March, 1875, left £300, the interest of which was to be divided among the following, which now receive: Poor of the Congregation, 23/8; Sunday School, 11/8; County Association, 23/6; Morecombelake Schools, 35/5; British School, £3 10s. 9d.

infant class-room was built at a cost of £108. The membership of the church, which has always been small in comparison with the size of the congregation, was, in 1878, sixty-eight, but the Sunday school, which is the oldest in the district,\* contained 383 scholars and thirty-one teachers.

On the first of October, 1878, the Rev. Joseph Ogle, educated at the Lancashire College and for the previous ten years minister of New Mills, Derbyshire, entered upon the duties of the ministry. As he is still the pastor of the church and the writer of this sketch it would be obviously improper that any estimate should be formed of his work. This must be left to other and later hands. But some of the changes that have been made in the last twenty years may be set down. In 1881 the Manse or minister's house, in North Road, was erected at a cost of over £1000. Two years later the interior of the chapel was re-modelled, the old high seats and the vestry,† which projected into the chapel between the front doors ("the cold meat larder," as some young folks irreverently called it) were removed and the whole building re-seated, the vestibule and the class-rooms and vestry behind the pulpit formed, and the whole beautified at a cost of £450. A year or two later one half of the roof was renewed. In 1891 in order to provide additional class-room accommodation for the Sunday school, negotiations were entered into for acquiring a house, late the offices of the late Mr. B. Chandler, for the purpose. In the midst of the negotiations a great blow fell upon the church. Dr. Williams, who had been a deacon since 1857, and for thirty-five years superintendent of the Sunday

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\* The writer has been unable to find any record of the establishment of the Sunday school. It must, however, have been some time prior to 1803 when the old chapel in Long Street was reserved for Sunday and day school purposes.

† In connection with the vestry a curious but well authenticated story is told. There was in it a peculiarly comfortable seat. It appears that an important member of the congregation holding one of the best positions in the neighbourhood, but irascible withal, was on one occasion moved to anger by something the preacher said, whereupon he declared that he would never enter the chapel again. The words were scarcely spoken before he began to regret them. But he felt bound by them. And as this vestry was not technically in the chapel, he built for himself this seat. And here Sunday after Sunday for many years he sat, virtually in the pillory—an object lesson of the folly of speaking unadvisedly with the lips.

school (in which time it had increased nearly three-fold—in whom every good institution in the church and the town lost a friend and helper—died and was carried to his grave amid signs of affection and universal mourning, such as the death of a private citizen rarely evokes. It was thereupon decided to go on with the work and to call the new class-rooms by his name, “The Williams Memorial.” This was done. The cost of the premises and necessary alterations was £850, of which £450 was raised by subscription. The balance was provided by Dr. Williams’ family in accordance with his own unfulfilled intention, subject to a payment of £16 a year for one life. This has hitherto been met by rents received from the lower story let as offices. In the same year J. K. D. W. Digby, Esq., M.P., generously gave to the trustees a plot of ground at the rear of the lecture-room, and rented to them a strip of land in the Fair Field, at the nominal rent of one shilling a year, to enable a pathway to be made from the chapel to Hound Street, which has the effect of making the building much more accessible from the higher part of the town. Mr. Ogle has for the last eleven years acted as the Secretary of the Dorset Association of Congregational Churches which carries on Home Missionary work in the county, and is a member of the committee of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

The church now numbers one hundred and thirty members.

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### SALWAY ASH.

Salway Ash is a small hamlet in the parish of Netherbury, and lies two miles north-west of Bridport. From a very early period efforts were made to establish services in this part of the county. As early as June, 1672, a Congregational service was held in the house of Thomas Reev, in Chideock. In October, 1707, Mary and Martha Pinney licensed their house in Symondsbury for services. These ladies were no doubt relatives, probably daughters, of the Rev. John Pinney ousted from the parish church of Broadwindsor,\* and who settled at Bettiscombe,

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\* See pp. 62 and 63.



where he died, December, 1706. It is worth notice that his youngest son, Azariah, was condemned to death at the Bloody Assizes, but, instead of being executed, was sold into slavery, and deported to Nevis, one of the West India Islands, and was redeemed by his father, at a cost of £68, returning home in 1701.\* The other houses opened for services in the immediate neighbourhood, and formally licensed, were that of Ralph Phelps, "called Hackeridge" (Hawkridge), October, 1710; of Eliza Thomas, widow, at Chideock, October, 1717; of Elizabeth Thomas, also of Chideock, October, 1733; of William Pitcher, at South Bowood, January, 1751; of Stephen Pitcher, at "Bluntshay" (Blundelshay), a little further up the vale, in April, 1754; and the house of John Tizzard, at Salway Ash, October, 1824. These were services in private houses, and had a more or less intermittent and precarious existence, being dependent upon the lives and the convenience of the occupants. But these early efforts were not quite lost; they resulted in the erection of two chapels—one at Chideock, which is, or was recently, let to the Wesleyans—the other at Salway Ash. The chief promoter of the building at Salway Ash was a pious farmer, who lived in the neighbourhood, and was a member of the Bridport Church. The land was given, the little chapel, capable of seating eighty worshippers, was built and paid for, and conveyed to trustees in 1843.† Since that date, services have been continuously held on Sunday evenings, conducted by zealous laymen, who walk out from Bridport for the purpose. The utility of the place has, however, been marred by a conspicuous example of overlapping. In 1846, the Wesleyans built a chapel close to ours, and more recently a district church, connected with the Established Church, has been built almost opposite the chapel, and two other district churches have been built within easy walking distance. The population is small, and does not increase. One place of worship would serve all the needs of the neighbourhood, a fact recognised by the leaders of the Wesleyan and Congre-

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\* Roberts, Monmouth ii., 243.

† The Deeds are in the possession of the Church at Bridport.



gational chapels, who arrange that service shall be held in one chapel in the afternoon, and in the other in the evening, the congregations at both being practically the same people.

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## SPETISBURY.

This pleasant village lies about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles south-east of Blandford, and is a station on the Somerset and Dorset Railway. An ancient fortification known as "Castle Hill" or "Spetisbury Rings" overlooks it, and is in full view of the more important fortress of Badbury across the wide valley of the Stour. We learn from the Morrice MSS.\* that John Trot or Trottle,† who held the living of Spetisbury and Charlton Marshall, was one of the ejected, but we know nothing further of him, except that he had filled the office for at least a dozen years. In the latter part of last century the Rev. E. Ashburner, M.A., Congregational Minister of Poole, who died July 2nd, 1804, was accustomed to preach at Spetisbury once in 6 weeks. "Neither the dark nights, nor the severity of the weather could intimidate him, or cool his zeal in attempting to do good."‡ We cannot ascertain where the service was held.

The first Chapel was built by Mr. Paine, boot and shoemaker, on his own freehold garden, and was let by him for the services and Sunday school at a yearly rental of £5. The daughter of Mr. Paine is married to Mr. Robert Hicks, a very old and staunch member of the Blandford Church. Mr. Paine's property, at least this part of it, passed into the hands of Mr. T. H. Bennett, senr., and was left by will to his daughter Annie, who married a Mr. Hawkins. In coarse of time Mr. Hawkins, who resided in Berkshire, offered the Chapel, cottage at the back, and garden reaching down to the river for sale. On an effort being made to secure the property, Mr. Hawkins, who had in early life been a teacher in the Spetisbury Sunday school, generously gave £100 towards the purchase money (£240), and Miss Hamer, of Blandford, most kindly provided the balance and paid the cost of

\* Dr. Williams's Library.

† Calamy.

‡ Evang. Mag., 1804, p. 482.

conveyance. The chapel was put in trust in connection with the parent church at Blandford, and the Deed is dated August 14th, 1857.

After the purchase it was found that various repairs and improvements were necessary. Mr. Hawkins again showed his practical sympathy by giving a donation of £25 towards this object, and friends who had made promises of money not needed towards the purchase, consented to apply their contributions towards the renovation fund, and thus all the expense was met.

Miss Greenaway, seeing the pressing need of a Sunday school, went into Blandford and induced Mr. Angel Symes Hodges to undertake the work. The school was started in 1811 and Mr. Hodges filled the office of Superintendent for the long space of 70 years. He died in 1886 at the patriarchal age of 94.

At the time the school was formed much ignorance and indifference to religion prevailed in the parish; the aged rector held but one service on the Sunday (he conducted another at Charlton Marshall), which was very scantily attended, one account says the average was five persons. No efforts whatever were made on behalf of the young, and there was little pastoral oversight. The friends from Blandford taught the children morning and afternoon alternately, so as not to interfere with their attendance at the Established Church, to which most of the parents belonged. The evening was devoted to preaching, when many Episcopalians attended. The meeting-house was viewed with kindly feeling, and the efforts centred therein were widely appreciated. The father of the late Mr. Augustine Green, of Blandford, Mr. Henry Green—himself a member of the Church of England—was wont to say: "Whatever success my boys have met with in life, the foundation was laid in Spetisbury Sunday School."

The earliest helpers from Blandford were Messrs. A. S. Hodges, T. H. Bennett, Wm. Pond, sen., James Pond, James Hobbs, sen., Malachi Fisher, and James Vernon, who were followed by Messrs. Bennett, J. George, J. Upward, W. T. Wyatt, Gay, and H. Hodges (who has kindly supplied valuable assistance in the preparation of this sketch). Among the friends on the spot who assisted in the

work some 60 years ago mention may be made of Mr. H. V. Stroud, miller, Mr. C. Fryer, and Miss Benson.

In the year 1835 Richard Hamer, Esq., came to reside in the pleasant mansion near the railway, now occupied by General Brendon ; he at once identified himself with the chapel, and took an active part in various efforts for the public good. He had previously resided at Long Ham for some years, where he was accustomed to teach twice in the school, and to take both services, being virtually the watchful and diligent pastor of the little church, and "all for love, and nothing for reward." Whilst residing at Spetisbury he often preached both in this place and at Sturminster, took an active part in the work of the County Association, and so lived the gospel as to win the confidence and respect of all parties. He removed to Longfleet, Poole, in 1846, where he died three years later, and was buried in the Skinner-street graveyard. His daughter, Miss Hamer, of Blandford, already referred to, has shown a deep practical interest in this and other village stations, and is ready unto every good work. In the year 1844, Mr. T. A. Homer came to occupy a large farm in the parish, and, with his family, attended the little chapel, adding still further to its strength and prosperity. About this time a morning service was started, and a day school established. Mr. Homer, who removed to Tolpuddle about 1848, was afterwards associated with the churches at Bere Regis and Puddletown.

John Basley, who had studied at Cotton End, near Bedford, was sent here in 1843, as the agent of the Home Missionary Society, and had charge of this place and Sturminster, preaching also in other villages. He was ordained in September, 1845, the Revs. R. Chamberlain, T. Durant, and J. Frost (tutor) taking the chief parts in the solemn service. Mr. Basley married Anna, daughter of Mr. Joseph Notting, of Poole. In 1848 he removed to East Cowes, and, after filling other pastorates, died in London, January, 1882. His life is spoken of as one "of patient endurance and earnest work for God." James Nelson Robjohns followed for about two or three years ; he was afterwards pastor at Wymondham, and Narborough (31 years) where he died, March 13th, 1897.

William Palmer succeeded him in the charge of the two churches, but was in delicate health, and, when the case became serious, he removed to Blandford, where he died in 1852. Friends in that town, and the teachers at Spetisbury, raised a fund in order to make some little provision for the widow and children. Since the decease of Mr. Palmer the work in this place has been carried on entirely by Blandford friends (with local help). Among those engaged of recent years we may mention the names of Messrs. J. Dalrymple, Wm. Coombs, O. Grinter, F. Ralph, H. C. Polden, A. Harris, and F. Easton; the helpers of to-day are Messrs. H. Dudderidge, A. Hobbs, J. Riggs, senr., J. Riggs, junr., J. Archer, W. M. Pread, Jos. Brown, T. George, — Counter, and members of the C.E. Society at Blandford. The members at their own request were formed in 1876 into a branch church in connection with Blandford.

A large vestry was built in 1894, at a cost of £40, and was paid for the same year.

The large room behind the chapel, formerly used as a day school, has been converted into a cottage, and forms part of the chapel property.

The present deacons are Wm. Seaviour (also superintendent of Sunday school), and Thomas Meering.

In the winter months a Band of Hope is held, and also a week night service in union with the Primitive Methodists, which the Rev. W. Fry comes out to take once a fortnight.

D.

## STALBRIDGE.

The earliest extant record in the possession of the church at Stalbridge is the following license to hold services in a Meeting-house, given at the Quarter Sessions held at Bridport in October, 1724. "At this Court was brought a certificate that there is a new erected House, called a Meeting house, situated in Stalbridge in this county, which is designed to be set apart for the worship



of God by a Congregation of Dissenting Protestants called Presbiterians and desired that the same might be entered among the Records of this Court. This Court doth thereupon Record the the same and the same is hereby Recorded."

The chapel or meeting house had been built when this license was applied for and the congregation had been formed which required the accommodation of a meeting-house. All this points to the accuracy of, a statement made in a manuscript, dated 1715, and preserved in Dr. Williams' Library in London, that "Stalbridge is a market town, in which there has been a Paedobaptist congregation ever since the Revolution" (1688). Whether the church, as an organised institution, is older still and dates back, as tradition says it does, to 1662, when the Rev. Richard de Shute was ejected from the rectory for Nonconformity, we have no means of ascertaining. It is hardly probable that it does, as Mr. Shute afterwards conformed, and died minister of Stowmarket. But the work that resulted in the formation of the church was certainly begun *about* 1662, by the Rev. John Sacheverell, of St. John's College, Oxford, son of the Rev. John Sacheverell, minister of Stoke-under-Ham, Somerset. Hutchins\* has a long account of him, in which he says that his memory is precious in the West of England. He was first settled at Rimpton, in Somerset, and afterwards at Wincanton, from which place he was ejected for Nonconformity in 1662. He was thrice married. By his first marriage he had one son, Joshua, whom he sent to Katharine Hall, Cambridge, where he proceeded B.A. in 1667, and who became rector of Marlborough, in Wilts. It throws a side light on the way in which the controversies of those times rent families asunder to know that Mr. Sacheverell disinherited this son because of his strict conformity to the Established Church. It is possible that in so doing he may have done something to embitter the mind of his grandson, Joshua's son, the notorious Dr. Henry Sacheverell, whose name is familiar to every reader of the history of the reign of Queen Anne, and who did more than any man of his age to inflame the minds of the populace against dissenters, and drew from De Foe his celebrated satire of "The

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\* Hutchins, Dorset, vol. iv., p. 423.



Shortest Way with Dissenters." Mr. Sacheverell's second marriage was childless. His third wife (who survived him) was Mary, daughter of Councillor Hussey, of Shaftesbury, and widow of Mr. Henry Derby (or Derby) an attorney. She brought him a small copyhold estate at Stalbridge, worth about £60 a year, which estate he returned, by leaving it to her two daughters by her former marriage, when he died. On his ejection from Wincanton, he came to live on this estate, and undoubtedly preached, probably in his own house. But in so doing he ran considerable risks. On one occasion, being at a meeting at Shaftesbury, he was arrested, along with four other ministers,\* and sent to Dorchester jail, where he remained three years. Here he and his fellow prisoners took turns in preaching out of a window to a considerable number of people who stood on the other side of the river. "In this confinement he contracted such an indisposition that he was never like the same man again, and soon after ended his days. He died in his chair, speaking to those about him, with great vehemence and affection, of the great work of the redemption of sinners. He wrote in the title page of all his books, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,' which was, therefore, engraven on his tombstone."† His widow seems to have removed to Sherborne, where "Mary Sacheverell, widow," had a legacy left her, with other members of the Derby family, in the will of Miss Mary Kilsbey, in 1734.

Mr. Sacheverell was succeeded by John Goffe or Goss (? ejected from Hackfield, Hants), who was licensed to hold services in the house of Ruth Rokcliffe, widow, May 16th, 1672.‡ He was followed by another ejected minister, the Rev. John Sprint, who at one time preached in the church at Gussage All Saints, and was at Portland when the Act of Uniformity came into force. He first settled at Wimborne but soon removed to Stalbridge, "where he had the care of a very respectable body of people. But as he was a gentleman of too liberal principles for some pious and rigid Nonconformists of the Antinomian stamp, this situation became very disagreeable to him and he left it and came and lived at Milborne Port. Such was

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\* See p. 119.

† Calamy.

‡ State Papers, Dom. 1672.

the spirit of his neighbourhood at Stalbridge that the justices removed him and his family by a special order to Sturminster. But a gentleman of fortune was so kind as to procure him a legal settlement, by giving him a lease of a small estate, and his friends prevailed with him to return and to fill up the duties as their pastor a little longer at Stalbridge.”\* While here he preached two sermons which were printed and are still to be read. The first is entitled “The Christian mourner comforted, or a sermon preached at the funeral of Mrs. Susanna Tyte, late wife of Mr. Thos. Tyte, sen., of Stalbridge, in the county of Dorset, Oct. 12, 1691. By John Sprint, the meanest and unworthiest servant of the best and greatest Master.” He appears to have been in poor health about this time for he refers to “that valetudinary state I have long been in.” The second sermon referred to is one that made some noise at the time. Its title was “The Bride-woman’s Counsellor. A sermon preached at a wedding May 11, 1699, at Sherbon (Sherborne) in Dorsetshire. By J. Sprint.” The text was 1 Cor. vii., 34, and the doctrine he laid down and enforced was that “it is the duty incumbent on all married women to be extraordinary careful to content and please their husbands.” It may, perhaps, be said that this would not be acceptable to the advocates of women’s rights nowadays. It did not please some even in those days. The matter was taken up by two ladies, Lady Chudleigh and Miss Singer, afterwards Mrs. Rowe, who published in 1701, “The Ladies’ Defence, or a Bride woman’s Counsellor answered: a Poem in a dialogue between Sir John Brute, Sir William Loveall, Melissa, and a Parson.” The parson is, of course, the villain of the piece. In the poem the parson is made to say:—

“I’ve told the women what’s of them required:  
Shew’d them their duty in the clearest light,  
Adorn’d with all the charms that could invite:  
Taught them their husbands to obey and please,  
And to their humours sacrifice their ease:  
Give up their reason, and their wills resign,  
And every look and every thought confine.”

To which Melissa, speaking for her sisters, replies:—

“But unto us is there no deference due?”

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\* Thompson’s MSS. “Millborne Port.”

Must we pay all and look for none from you ?  
 Why are not husbands taught as well as we :  
 Must they from all restraints, all laws be free ?  
 Passive obedience you've to us transferred,  
 And we must drudge in paths where you have err'd :  
 That antiquated doctrine you disown,  
 'Tis now your scorn, and fit for us alone."

Time passed on—Mr. Sprint, as we shall presently see, removed to Milborne Port and was succeeded by the Rev. Henry Rutter, who, having lost his wife,\* married Mr. Sprint's daughter. At this wedding another sermon was preached, which had evident reference to the questions asked above. It was called "The Bridegroom's Counsellor and the Bride's Comforter. A sermon preached at Milborne Port, in Somersetshire, 1714-5, at the wedding of Mrs. Mary Fenwick Sprint, daughter of the Rev. Mr. John Sprint. By Benjn. Aycrigg, S.S.E.M. Dedicated to Mr. Henry Rutter, of Stalbridge, and his pious consort, Mrs. Mary Fenwick Rutter." Text 1 Cor. vii., 33. In the first head he says "I shall prove that it is the duty of husbands to please their wives."

Mr. Sprint left Stalbridge and settled at Milborne Port in 1700, or shortly after. There he taught a grammar schools in addition to gathering a considerable congregation, which met in a room in the house of a respectable hosier. The room was fitted up for worship and had in it a pulpit and a reading desk. Mr. Sprint is said to have made it his constant practice to read and pray at the desk, and never ascended the pulpit but to preach. He had some other peculiarities, always wearing a cassock when he preached and a rose in his hat. He continued at Milborne Port until his death in 1718, being protected from the malice of the times by the influence of John Hoskyns, Esq., a gentleman of considerable means at Purse Caundle. He appears to have been the founder of the church at Templecombe, where he preached while at Milborne Port, until the congregation was able to support a separate minister.

Mr. Sprint's successor was the Rev. Henry Rutter, who married his daughter, and afterwards removed to South Petherton and

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\*Urith, daughter of the Rev. Compton South, ejected from Barwick St. John. She died July 7, 1712, and was buried at Donhead St. Mary.

thence to Honiton in 1745. His widow was living, at a very advanced age, in 1775.\*

The Rev. Samuel Grinstead † is said to have settled at Stalbridge in 1724, the year when the old chapel was built, and he remained about fifteen years. About the close of his ministry, in 1738, the recently instituted rector of Stalbridge, Rev. William Lowe, caused a religious census of the parish to be made. It was taken by a Mr. Curry, but on what lines we are not told. An entry in the parish register gives the following results :

In the town tything	798	...	of whom	128	were	Dissenters
Weston tything	...	182	...	"	9	"
Thornhill tything	...	222	...	"	39	"
Gomershay tything	...	55	...	"	1	"

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Total inhabitants,	1257	Total Dissenters,	177
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The next minister appears to have been the Rev. Mr. Herbert, who held and preached Arian sentiments. "He was a Welshman, a good scholar, fine in person and of gentlemanly manners." After a ministry extending to about twelve years he removed into Somerset. The leaven of Arianism had evidently not yet infected the whole church, for the minister next chosen was the Rev. John Hellier, who, after a successful course of study at Coward's Academy, settled in the Isle of Wight and thence removed to Stalbridge. The record of him is that he was "a man of exalted piety and exemplary character, and a very evangelical preacher." But the bright promise of his ministry was only shortlived. His sun went down ere it was noon. After a bright, brief ministry of between two and three years, consumption carried him to an early grave in 1754.

The church book records that "after his decease the church was for some time without the advantage of pastoral care, and declined in spirituality and a regard to vital godliness." The Arian teaching of his predecessor had evidently something to do with this, for the next person chosen as minister was the Rev. Moses Davis, another Welshman a student of Coward's Academy holding Arian sentiments. There is some uncer-

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\* Thompson MSS.

† From Winsham?



taintly about him. It is supposed that he remained about four years, tho' the exact period is unknown, and that his ministry was terminated by his death. But the writer thinks this must be the Moses Davis who settled at Shaftesbury in 1759. As in so many other places, cold, unevangelical preaching led to a decline in the congregation. Indeed, religion seems to have been at a low ebb in Stalbridge about this time. Under date August 30th, 1766, Wesley writes in his journal: "We rode to Stalbridge, long the seat of war, by a senseless, insolent mob, encouraged by their betters, so called, to outrage their quiet neighbours. For what? Why, they were mad. They were Methodists, so, to bring them to their senses, they would beat their brains out. They broke their windows, leaving not one whole pane of glass, spoiled their goods, and assaulted their persons with dirt and rotten eggs and stones whenever they appeared in the street. But no magistrate, though they appealed to several, would show them either mercy or justice. At length they wrote to me. I ordered a lawyer to write to the rioters, He did so, but they set him at nought. We then moved the Court of King's Bench. By various artifices they got the trial put off from one assizes to another for eighteen months. But it fell so much the heavier on themselves when they were found guilty; and from that time, finding there is law for Methodists, they have suffered them in peace. I preached near the main street, without the least disturbance, to a large and attentive congregation." He also preached here again on September 28th, 1768, "to a large and seriously attentive congregation.

But brighter days were in store for the church. "Up to this time," writes the Rev. J. Horsey, "the congregation had been decidedly Unitarian, with but one exception, Mr. John Gray, a respectable farmer in the neighbourhood. After the death (or removal) of Mr. Davis, Mr. Gray exerted his influence to settle his son at Stalbridge." And not unsuccessfully, for in 1761 the people invited the Rev. William Gray, a man of earnest piety, unbounded enthusiasm and unwearied zeal, to become their pastor. Here he remained—preaching also at Templecombe, in Somerset—for the remainder of his days. "His evangelical



sentiments and holy conversation were made universally useful to the church in eradicating the error which had crept in, and by building up saints in their most holy faith." He was ordained in the year 1761, and died in 1814, in the 74th year of his age. That he was an active man the records of other churches in the neighbourhood, which he helped on special occasions, and of the County Association show, and that he was no narrow-minded bigot, unable to understand and sympathise with other men's difficulties, is assured by the fact that when, in 1773, a large number of ministers petitioned Parliament that the terms on which licenses to dissenting ministers were granted—terms which Arians and Unitarians felt to be specially objectionable—he was one of the petitioners. "As a christian, he was distinguished by a correct judgment, a devotional spirit and a holy life, and as a minister by affection, fidelity and perseverance in the discharge of his duties." \*

It seems that after the long pastorate of Mr. Gray, the church could not easily find a suitable successor but remained without a minister until 1816, when the Rev. Theophilus Eastman, B.A., who had been educated first at Gosport and then at the University of Glasgow, where he graduated, accepted a call to the pastorate, which he held until he removed to Fareham in 1821. He remained at Fareham twelve years, combining with his other work the duties of classical tutor to Dr. Bogue's Missionary Seminary. He next removed to Widcomb, near Bath, and kept a boarding school. Afterwards he was at Ruthin, North Wales, and at Whitchurch, Salop. He retired to London in 1859 and there died in 1863. "All his lifetime he had been subject to depression, probably constitutional, which oftentimes weighed down his spirit to the dust." As he drew near the end of his journey the clouds lifted, and the sun shone in upon his soul.†

After Mr. Eastman's removal the churches at Stalbridge and Henstridge entered into a union which continued until 1845.

The Rev. J. Horsey came next, remaining only two years. Of his subsequent career, we know little, but are indebted to him

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\* Evangelical Mag., 1815, p. 34.

† Memoir Congregational Year Book, 1864.

for the care with which he entered the history of the church in the Church Book. From his work many of the above particulars have been gathered. He died at Taunton, December 2nd, 1878, aged 78. He was succeeded by the Rev. John Bowden Simper in 1823, who became minister of Beaminster in June, 1825. The Rev. Philip Kent followed in 1826. At the close of his brief ministry of a few months, the church resolved to have a necessary and long-delayed piece of work done, and so decided that no minister should be invited to settle until "the chapel be properly invested in the hands of trustees." This appears to have set matters right, and in 1827 the Rev. W. S. Berry, previously assistant at Kidderminster, was invited, and laboured for four years with very considerable success. "On his removal the pulpit was occupied for six months by Mr. Sparks, during whose ministry the chapel underwent considerable alterations and improvements. Owing to pecuniary embarrassments, in which he had become involved previous to his settlement, Mr. Sparks was under the necessity of leaving the neighbourhood," leaving a debt on the improved chapel of some £200.

In June, 1853, the Rev. Antonio Bisenti,\* became minister. He was a native of Portugal, born near Satubal about 1800. His near relatives were slain in the Peninsular War, and an uncle living at a frontier town in Spain, to whom he fled, intending to dedicate the lad to the priesthood of the Church of Rome, sent him to a neighbouring monastery. "His first impressions were those of interest and delight at the scenery and splendour of the Romish ritual and the seemingly devoted lives of the priests in charge. Before long, however, he became horrified at the inconsistencies and immorality of these men, and he determined, young as he was, to undertake the awful risk of an escape. One day, seeing the ponderous gate of the monastery open and himself unobserved he fled, turning into a dense forest for shelter, until nightfall. Here he fell in with a band of robbers whose leader, touched with sympathy, treated him kindly and fed him. Next day the robbers took him to the nearest town where an old lady showed him much kindness. This town was not far from

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\* Memoir in Congregational Year Book, 1873.

the British camp, under the command of the Duke of Wellington ; and Bisenti, wishing to see the army followed some orange-women to the camp. Here an English officer, asked his name, &c. ; and when he heard the word ' Bisenti,' said he had received some acts of kindness from his friends and would gladly adopt the boy as his own child," which he accordingly did. On being ordered to America he took him with him. His generous friend fell in the battle of New Orleans, leaving Bisenti, with a sum of money for his education and support, in charge of a brother officer. After the war this officer returned to Ireland, bringing the boy with him and sent him to Bath, where he was educated and put to business. After preaching in the villages in the neighbourhood for some time as a lay-preacher, he was invited to settle as minister at Horningsham, where he was ordained June 8th, 1830. He appears to have been very successful at Stalbridge, during the earlier years of his ministry. The debt left behind by Mr. Sparks was speedily cleared off. The congregations grew and many were admitted to membership. In 1834 a new chapel was built at Henstridge to accommodate the growing congregations, at a cost of £600, the whole of which was raised and paid by 1839. In this year, taking advantage of the Act passed in 1836, the chapel at Stalbridge was registered for marriages. An entry in the church book, dated February 25th, 1842, shows that there was trouble in the church. It runs as follows: "whereas the following individuals . . . having endeavoured to sow the seeds of discord and dissention in the church and congregation, and having for more than twelve months absented themselves from all the ordinances of the House of God, be no longer considered as members of this church." Then follow eight names, one of them being that of the senior deacon. Early in 1845, the union between the two churches at Stalbridge and Henstridge was dissolved, greatly to the regret of the pastor and the church at Stalbridge. In 1866, owing to the growing infirmities of age, and the evident wish of the congregation, which had become very small, Mr. Bisenti resigned his charge, but continued to live in the town and visit among the poor and sick as he was able until his death on January 16th, 1872. Thirty years

have passed away since his ministry terminated, but there are still many who remember him with affection and thanksgiving.

In April, 1867, the Rev. George Rogers, from Pendlebury, Manchester, became pastor of the once more associated churches of Stalbridge and Henstridge, and was publicly recognised in September following. A new chapel being considered desirable a public meeting was held in the Red Lion room, Oct. 19, 1869, W. H. Williams, M.D., of Sherborne, presiding, when it was resolved to build a new chapel, vestry and school-room, at a cost of £1000, of which £500 had then been promised. The foundation stone was laid June 6, 1870, by Matthew Devenish, Esq., of Dorchester, and the place opened on November 8th. And a year later—Nov. 28, 1871—there is this joyful record, “the whole of the cost of our new chapel, school, &c. (£1400) is now paid.” This sum did not include the cost of an organ presented by Mr. R. Coombs, nor of a communion service given by Mr. T. Maidment, one of the deacons. Mr. Rogers’ pastorate came to an end early in 1872, when he removed to Yeovil, and soon after to Hawley Clay County, Minnesota, to establish an agricultural settlement, of which he was leader and chaplain. He died in America, December, 1895.

The Rev. T. Toy, from Meare, near Glastonbury, succeeded in 1872. Finding the work of the two churches too arduous he removed in December, 1877, to Highworth, Wilts, whence he afterwards went to Uckfield, and at the time of writing is minister of Burley, in the New Forest. After Mr. Toy’s departure and some unsuccessful efforts to effect a satisfactory settlement, an arrangement was made, at the instance of the late Mr. James Coombs, with the Rev. T. G. Masters, a Baptist minister, late of Bradninch, Devon, to take temporary oversight of the united churches and Stourton Caundle, while they were without a pastor, and he was at liberty. This arrangement lasted for over ten years’ and on the whole worked satisfactorily. Mr. Masters began his work in October, 1878, and removed March, 1889. During his time a new heating apparatus was put into the chapel at a cost of £70. On his ceasing to be the minister of Stalbridge he



continued for a time his work at Henstridge, and the union of these two churches once more came to an end.

The Rev. W. P. Hogben, a student of the Bristol Institute, commenced his ministry here in July, 1890. In 1891, a house in Gold Street was bought as a minister's residence. The total cost, including repairs, was £461 10s. 9d., and was provided by the sale of the capital of the endowments,\* with the consent of the Charity Commissioners, producing £301 3s. 7d., and £160 7s. 2d. raised by public subscription. Mr. Hogben resigned the charge in August, 1893, having accepted an invitation to Glastonbury.

In January, 1894, the Rev. A. O. Moore, of the Nottingham Institute, pastor of the Colwick Street Church, Nottingham, was cordially invited to become the pastor. and settled in March following. During his ministry the church and congregation increased. Having received, he accepted an invitation to become pastor of the church at Thornbury, in Gloucestershire, and resigned the charge in December, 1896, and was succeeded by the Rev. Charles Harvey Cook, formerly minister of Horley, near Wakefield, the present minister.,

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## STOKE-ABBOT.

Stoke-Abbot is an extensive parish in the fertile and beautiful vale of Marshwood, and lies under the southern slope of Lewesdon Hill, the highest point in the county. To this place belongs the honour of having been the home of one of the heroic two thousand ministers who were silenced or ejected from the Established church in 1660 and 1662, because they neither could nor would conform to the requirements of the Prayer Book. This was the Rev. Mr. Avianen, a Scotchman, of whose subsequent history we at present know absolutely nothing. He

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\* These consisted of £200 settled in trust by deed dated 1788, by which Jonathan Gray, Joseph Green, and James Tite conveyed this money, which was then in their hands, to trustees; and £100 left by the will of Richard Strong, dated April 23, 1815. The income of both sums was to be paid to the minister.



appears to have left the neighbourhood immediately, or, if he remained in the neighbourhood, to have abandoned the ministry. No effort was made to hold services outside the parish church, either then, or ten years later, at the date of Charles II.'s Indulgence.

It was more than a hundred and twenty years after Mr. Avianen had preached the gospel in the parish church before a Nonconformist place of worship was built in the parish. This was at Wood Mill, at the west end of the parish, and some two miles away from the village. This appears to have been the earliest effort made to evangelize a peculiarly dark and neglected district.\* Here, in April, 1786, "the dwelling-house, Barton, and orchard of Thomas Hopkins, miller," were licensed as an Independent place of worship, and on the land—apparently in the orchard—Mr. Love, the owner, built a chapel which was never conveyed to trustees, though used for service for half a century. As long as Mr. Love lived he set aside £50 a year for the minister, and after his death, his nieces, who inherited his property, paid the reduced sum of £25 for some years. Who the original ministers were is now unknown. Possibly the Rev. Matthew Anstis, of Waytown, supplied the pulpit, and after him the Rev. Mr. Pyke, "a worthy minister at Netherbury."

In these earlier years events took place which are chronicled in the Beaminster Church Book. We give the record in full, feeling sure that it will be read with interest.

"1805, May 3rd, Mrs. Eliz. Legg, of Stoke, near Beaminster, was admitted a member with us, this Ev. On the occasion of a Mr. Hull, of Martock,† preaching in the open street of this town, several years ago, she was led by curiosity to hear him. His text was Rev. i., 7: 'Every eye shall see Him, and they also, who pierced Him.' The Lord gave her a view of her own sins as having pierced the Saviour, and led her from that time 'to read the Bible with new eyes,' as she expressed herself. The address of Christ to his disciples and his prayer for them, John xiv.-xvii.,

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\* See pages 170 and 63.

† The Rev. Christopher Hull, founded the church at Bower Hinton, Martock, 1791, where he continued forty-two years.

were much blessed to her comfort under first serious impressions. She experienced much persecution from carnal relations for her constant attendance on the word preached, even to the being threatened 'to be turned out of doors.' But the Lord enabled her to persevere and brought her out of all difficulties. A sense of the worth of her own soul, and of the importance of gospel preaching, led her to be concerned for the souls of her family, and of her fellow-villagers at Stoke. She opened her house for God,\* and our minister preached in it August 26th, 1798. But the rudeness of the villagers, encouraged by the prophane clergyman of the place (by name, Hopkins) was such, that after several narrow escapes from death, by throwing stones, he gave up the service in the following December. The Lord seems to have blessed Mrs. Legg and her family, like that of Obed-edom, 'for the Ark's sake,' 2 Sam. vi., 12, for they are, evidently, rising in the world. May their prosperity not be the snare of their souls !

"It may not be improper to record (tho' not strictly Church business) that a trial at Law, instituted against the Clergyman for the concern which his son [This unhappy youth went a few months after to the West Indies, where God soon cut him off by a fever] had in the Riots at Stoke, was decided at Dorchester, March 15th, 1800, in our favour. The hand of Providence was visible in it. The Judge would not suffer the Counsellor on the side of the Defendant (Mr. Jekyll) even to speak on his behalf. He attempted once and again, but the Judge silenced him, saying, 'If you can bring any proofs to invalidate the charge, I am ready to hear them ; but you know you cannot defend a Riot.' And on his attempting again, the Judge replied, 'No ; I will not hear any defence of a Riot. These men as Dissenters, had a right to worship God there ; and they ought not to be molested.' And immediately turning to the Jury he observed 'It would be an insult to their good sense to bring such a cause before them for consideration ; therefore, he should fine the Defendant (Hopkins) £10 to the King, together with the expenses of the Prosecution, (which we understand amounted to about £30 more.) Our hearts blessed God for so favourable an issue ; and viewed the

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\* Dwelling-house of Wm. Legg, licensed 2nd October, 1798.

conduct of the Judge in not permitting the Advocate of our Opponent even to speak in his behalf, as a public testimony of his detestation of the cause and a greater honour to us than if it had been argued in the usual way, and a still heavier fine imposed on the worthless Defendant. We were given to understand that his wife went in a post-chase to the place, to see the end of the business, exulting (as she boasted to some) 'That the Expense would be paid by us.' But she returned home somewhat crest-fallen.

‘ Thus shall the men that hate the Saints,  
Be blasted from the sky ;  
Their glory fades, their courage faints,  
And all their projects die ! ’ (Watts, Ps., 129.)”

The writer evidently belonged to the church militant !

Both parties, however, appear to have been defeated. The leader of the riot against the services was fined ; but the services in Mrs. Legg’s house were discontinued. The services in the lonely Wood Mill Chapel however went on. The first minister of Wood Mill remembered (by Mrs. Orchard, whose family has long been settled in the immediate neighbourhood) is the Rev. James Cope, who settled at Waytown in 1814. In the late Mr. Orchard’s diary there is the following entry “ Oct. 19th, 1821, paid Rev. J. Cope, solely for Wood Mill £3 2s. od.” Mr. Cope left the neighbourhood in 1823, and was succeeded by the Rev. J. C. Browne, who resided at Loders, and intinerated among the villages and hamlets of this part of Dorset, preaching at Loders, Nettlecombe, Waytown, Broadwindsor, and Wood Mill, for nearly ten years. He appears to have been a musical\* and an eccentric man. The story is told of how on one occasion he stopped the musicians (the violin and trumpet players) in the middle of a hymn and lectured them soundly on their playing, and at another time leaned over the pulpit and said sharply “ If you can’t play better than that, I wouldn’t play at all ”—a remark that was duly resented. After Mr. Browne’s removal the work was taken up by the Rev. F. Smith.† The next minister was the Rev. James Prior

\* Mr. Browne wrote hymn tunes, some of which are still in the possession of Mr. Orchard’s grandson, Mr. I. O. Trevett of Sherborne.

† For account of him see pages, 87, 64, 65.

who settled as minister of Waytown and the neighbouring villages, living at Milton, in 1834.

About the time that Mr. Prior commenced his work in the district, the Rev. A. Bishop, aided and encouraged by zealous friends in his congregation at Beaminster, made another attempt to establish regular services in the village of Stoke Abbot. They conducted services in a private house with varying degrees of encouragement. During the winter of 1837, however, "a strong desire began to be expressed by several inhabitants connected with the Established Church, to have a distinct place of worship. A subscription was commenced, ground was given by Mr. Conway, a member of the church at Beaminster, and materials were gratuitously brought by different farmers of the village and vicinity ;"\* with which a small but neat chapel capable of seating 160 persons was built. The chapel was opened Oct. 5, 1838. So large was the attendance that overflow services had to be held both afternoon and evening. The collection, £35, left but a trifling deficiency to be discharged. From the time of opening the place was put under the charge of Mr. Prior and his helpers, only occasional services being held in the old chapel at Wood Mill, which appears to have been entirely abandoned in 1840, when the pulpit was transferred to the new chapel where it still stands, a link binding together the old work and the new. Wood Mill chapel was later on pulled down.

The following hymn was composed for and sung at the opening service :

Welcome, welcome, little flock,  
 Gathering round to worship here !  
 Though an envious world may mock  
 Simple rites and faith sincere,  
 He before whom angels stand  
 Visits oft the lowly band.

Said He not, "where two or three  
 In My name together meet,  
 There amidst them I will be,"  
 Shall not this your joy complete ?  
 Heaven and earth may pass away,  
 But His Word shall ne'er decay.

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\* Home Miss. Mag., 1838, p. 177.

Though no consecrated dome  
 Echoes to the songs we raise,  
 In his ear they shall become  
 Welcome strains of grateful praise,  
 And the young, at His command,  
 Learn the way to Canaan's land.

Though no forms of worldly state  
 Mingle here in pompous train,  
 Yet our vows at heaven's gate  
 Speedy entrance shall obtain ;  
 For the great High-Priest above  
 Pleads with all-prevailing love.

Underneath this simple roof  
 Rises sweet the voice of prayer ;  
 Glows each heart—delightful proof  
 That the King of Zion's here !  
 While with fervour all adore :  
 What can loftiest temple more ?

A Sunday school was at once established and has been carried on ever since.

Mr. Prior appears to have left about 1845, and was succeeded by the Rev. Daniel Horscraft in 1846. The pulpit has always been supplied, principally by lay preachers, and has formed part of the charge, first of the Home Missionary at Waytown, then on Waytown ceasing to have a Home Missionary, of the minister of Broadwindsor. Since 1888 Stoke Abbot has been under the pastoral charge of the minister of Beaminster. The place was put in trust by deed, dated June 7th, 1892.

All through the years since the erection of the chapel good congregations have gathered afternoon and evening, and much good work has been accomplished. No one can visit the place and look around on the bright, interested, and intelligent faces of the people, or enter into conversation with them, without feeling that the blessing of God has attended the work, and that the aid afforded by the County Association, without which the work could hardly have been continued, has been money well spent.

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## STOUR ROW.

Stour Row is a hamlet in the parish of Stour Provost, and lies three miles west of Shaftesbury, near the beautifully wooded hill, which is conspicuous from great distances, called Dunclyff. About the year 1838 the Rev. T. Evans, of Shaftesbury, who at that time conducted a boys' school, and who was in the habit of taking his pupils for long walks in the lovely country around his home, was struck with the fact that the population scattered about in this part of the county was totally unprovided with religious accommodation of any kind—the parish church at Stour Provost being three miles away from Stour Row, too far for old people and children to go to service at all times, and for the able-bodied to go in bad weather. As a matter of fact very few of them ever attended any place of worship at all, and were living in entire ignorance of the gospel. His sympathies were drawn out, and he determined to attempt to remedy this state of things. He accordingly visited the place, and eventually made arrangements to hold services in what was then a butcher's premises, but is now a carpenter's shop, situated exactly opposite the chapel of ease erected in 1868. Here he began work in 1839, opening a Sunday school and a preaching service, in which he was assisted by a number of young men, among whom may be named Mr. Perkins, of Birdbush, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Baker and Mr. James Keynes, of Shaftesbury. The latter, who was the son of the Rev. Richard Keynes, of Blandford, was at the time carrying on a large grocery business. God blessed the work. A flourishing Sunday school was gathered, the congregations increased, the services being welcomed by the people of the locality, and many were converted. This being part of Mr. Evans' work and charge, he preaching there as often as he could, viz.:—once in three weeks, the converts were not organised as a separate church, but became members of the church at Shaftesbury, where they usually attended the Lord's Supper, and, once in three months, for the convenience of the members unable to walk to the mother-church, Mr. Evans administered the Lord's Supper to this part of his church. The attempt to

evangelize a neglected part of the county had the sympathy and assistance of the County Association, which, in April, 1840, made a grant of £5, increased in 1842 to £7 10s., and next year to £10 a year. The work was not, however, regarded favourably by the parish clergyman and some of his friends, who, stimulated to new anxiety for the spiritual welfare of this part of the parish, either bought the premises or persuaded the tenant to get rid of the dissenting services and let the place for services conducted according to the Prayer Book. This put our friends on their mettle. They immediately bought a piece of ground (Dec. 1842) and entered into a contract with Mr. Lodder to build the present chapel upon it. It is said that the builder found the structure so much more expensive than he anticipated, that, in disgust, he declared that he would never enter the place after it was completed. There is, however, reason to believe that, like a wise man, he afterwards decided that "a bad resolution is better broken than kept." While the building was proceeding Mr. Evans and his friends were alarmed by a rumour that their title to the land was likely to be disputed. So persistent and apparently well-informed was the rumour that a Mr. Hunt, who had bought an adjacent plot of land on which he was erecting cottages, ceased work and allowed them to stand half finished for years. But the chapel went on, and was opened in September, 1843, when the Rev. W. Jay, of Bath, preached the opening sermon. In the new premises the work took a distinct step forward, and all things went on happily and without incident until February 25, 1849, when Mr. James Keynes thought it his duty to lay the following proposals before the congregation, reading a long address on the subject, which was afterwards printed and circulated throughout Dorset and the adjacent counties. 1.—That the members of the church worshipping in the Stour Row chapel should declare themselves an independent church, and no longer a part of the church at Shaftesbury, under the pastoral care of the Rev. T. Evans. 2.—That they should no longer go to Shaftesbury or wait for a visit from Mr. Evans or other ordained minister in order to receive the Lord's Supper or have their children baptised, but "have any ordinance of religion administered to you by those, without ex-

ception, who labour amongst you.” His contention was that to confine the administration of these ordinances to *ordained ministers* was to admit that which Independent Nonconformists have always denied, that ordination confers some spiritual grace. He said “Mr. Evans at certain times comes down to you to administer the Sacrament. By my permitting him to do so without a protest on my part I virtually allow him to do that which I thus acknowledge myself unable to perform. The power to do what I cannot he has received somewhere, and that from man, as we are both supposed to be converted characters, and the recipients of the Holy Spirit. The difference then between us must be this (I do not say the only difference), Mr. Evans has been ordained and I have not.” The people fell in with Mr. Keynes’ suggestions, declared themselves an Independent Church (March 13), and somewhat brusquely declined to receive Mr. Evans’ services any longer. In doing this they were within their rights, as was pointed out to them at the time. A self-governing community can decide for itself all such questions as who shall administer the ordinances of religion among them. But as to the wisdom, and the tone and manner of proceeding opinions may differ. It is difficult to judge of the latter without having been perfectly acquainted with all the parties.

But for the fact that the County Association made an annual grant to the place, which it was desired should be continued, nothing probably would have been heard of the matter outside the immediate locality. Mr. Evans, as in duty bound, brought the changed condition of things to the notice of the Association at its next meeting, in April. The grant was suspended in order that inquiries might be made. Mr. Keynes, who was of a “nervous temperament,” misunderstood the action of the Association, and was supported by his aged and honoured father. He was anxious that the County Association should make a declaration on the subject of laymen presiding at the Lord’s Table. The Association was equally anxious not to be turned into a Court of Appeal. Fearing, apparently, that their hands would be forced, the members absented themselves from the meeting at Wareham in September, so that there was not a quorum present. At this

meeting Mr. Keynes was present armed with a formidable, and it must be owned, able document, which he read. But in the absence of a quorum nothing could be done. Mr. Keynes, disappointed, wrote to the Secretary on Sept. 20, "I do not intend to renew the application for the grant usually given to the interest at Stour Row." The new church endorsed his action and withdrew from the Association, as did also the Rev. R. Keynes.\*

It is difficult to see how the grant could have been continued, quite apart from the merits of the above controversy, which had little or nothing to do with it. Mr. Evans was the minister of a poor church which was quite unable to give him an adequate stipend, and when he undertook the additional work at Stour Row, a grant of money was made on the understanding that it would enable the people there to pay a proportion of his salary. His services being no longer required, but replaced by unpaid volunteers, the reason for the grant no longer existed.

After the church had withdrawn from the Association, Mr. Keynes became the lay pastor, which office he held until he removed to Australia a few years later, when he was succeeded by Mr. Dennis, another Shaftesbury tradesman, who was very useful in preaching here and at Marnhull, Castle Hill and Compton. Mr. Dennis held the position for forty years, and usually preached two, sometimes three Sundays a month, other friends taking the remaining Sundays. In 1852, Mr. J. R. Perkins conveyed to Mr. Keynes a piece of land adjoining the chapel for a burying ground, and in this burying ground there is a monument to "James Keynes, late of Shaftesbury, who died in Australia, January 23rd, 1894, aged 77 years," and another to "William England Dennis, who died at Shrewton, Wilts, February 14th, 1895, aged 70."

The church has been greatly blessed in the good men who have either grown up in it or rendered service to it. In all the half-century since the above separation took place it has scarcely ever been disappointed of a preacher at the Sunday services. Great good has been done, the church membership having increased to fifty, notwithstanding many removals, and the

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\* See pages 39-40.



congregation filling the chapel, being especially and exceptionally large on Sunday mornings. The Sunday school too is vigorous, having seventy scholars and eight teachers. In addition there is a Temperance Society of ninety members, and a Bible Class, held on week-nights during the winter, numbers upwards of thirty adult members. The chapel has lately been renovated and is a most comfortable place of worship, in capital repair and free from debt.

Those at present responsible for the services are Messrs. Hutchings and Martin Hunt, of Stour Row, Mr. Druitt, of Gillingham, and Mr. Harding, of Marnhull.

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### STOURTON-CAUNDLE.

Stourton-Caundle is a village of about three hundred and fifty inhabitants, wholly dependent upon agriculture, situated about five miles south-east of Sherborne, and four miles from Milborne Port. Attempts were made, as far back as the early part of last century, to set up a Nonconformist preaching-place in the village. In 1721 the house of Sarah Willis was licensed as a Presbyterian place of worship, and in 1740 the house of Thomas Boshier was similarly licensed. What success attended the work then begun does not appear. It would seem that the services were discontinued for about a hundred years. At length the moral and spiritual condition of the place, in which one who knew it well says he "can remember many disgraceful scenes of drinking, fighting, swearing, and other immoral and ungodly deeds done in darkness, which a sense of shame forbids him to chronicle," attracted the attention and excited the pity of the Primitive Methodists, who determined to mission the place. Mr. R. Fish, who still lives and has favoured the writer with his reminiscences, then a young man living at Bagber, was selected to begin the work. One summer Sunday morning in 1844 he appeared in the village street, where, standing alone, he sang and read and prayed, and then preached to the little crowd that curiosity had brought



around him. The service finished, he announced that he would return on the following Sunday. Meanwhile, opposition was organised and a band of five or six strong young fellows vowed that they would drag the young preacher, if he should dare to appear, first through the water and then out of the village. Nothing daunted Mr. Fish made his way to the appointed place on the following Sunday. Just as he commenced his sermon those bent on mischief appeared. For a few moments they stood quietly on the outside of the crowd, waiting for their leader to give the signal for the assault. But in those few minutes the word had been carried home to the leader's heart, and to a companion who inquired whether he was not about to begin the attack, he replied "No! lads, I tell 'ee what 'tis, I do like to hear the young man and *I* shall not touch him." That settled the matter and the services proceeded in peace. The ringleader referred to became one of the first converts of the mission, lived a useful Christian life and died a happy death at Weymouth some few years ago.

But the troubles of the preachers were not over. The clergyman of the parish now took up the opposition, and, determined to put down the street preaching, gave Mr. Fish and three others into custody of the police. He was, however, equally unsuccessful, for on their being brought before the magistrates on the following day, they were discharged, with costs against the clergyman. The good work now went on, unhindered for a time, and a little church was gathered in the house of the village blacksmith. All went well with the little community until the Mormons came and opened a place and by their specious preaching drew away many. In the end both places were closed. Subsequently the Wesleyans preached in a cottage but somehow failed to establish themselves. Soon afterwards the attention of the Rev. E. H. Perkins, the earnest and active minister of the Congregational Church at Milborne Port, was called to the spiritually destitute condition of the place. Somewhere about the year 1847 or 1848 he commenced services in a large room formerly used as a school in the house occupied by Mr. James Walden, who gladly received Mr. Perkins and the

earnest laymen, such as Mr. Fish and his brothers, who co-operated with him. The Rev. A. Bisenti, of Stalbridge, also helped in the work, visiting the people in their homes and conducting the week-night services. Encouraged in their work by the crowded congregations that welcomed their ministrations, and by the fact that not only the labourers, but most of their employers also, took a personal interest in it, they resolved to build a Chapel. In response to an appeal made to him by a large number of the inhabitants, including the principal farmers and tradesmen, Sir Henry Ainslie Hoare, Bart., in 1859 leased a plot of ground, containing ten perches, for twenty-one years, in the very best position in the village, for the erection of a chapel. On this site a neat and comfortable chapel, capable of seating a hundred worshippers, was built by subscription. Mr. Perkins continued his services, and was responsible for the supply of the pulpit, until his removal from Milborne Port in 1868. The work then fell into the hands of the Rev. G. Rogers, the minister of Stalbridge Church, who was aided by the services of an evangelist. For a time this plan was remarkably successful, so much so that the jealousy of the vicar of the parish was provoked to such an extent that he wrote an extraordinary letter to the Dorset Association, who supported the evangelist, protesting against "a layman" being allowed to baptise the children of his parishioners, and comparing his efforts to reach the people in their homes to the visits of the marine-store dealer in search of rags and bones.\*

In 1879 Sir H. A. Hoare renewed the lease for another term of twenty-one years, the lease being granted to Mr. John Bugg, the tenant of the Manor Farm. About this time the responsibility for the services was taken over by Mr. James Coombs, of Henstridge, who arranged for supplies for the evening services, when he could not go over himself, the afternoon services being conducted by the Rev. F. G. Masters. Since Mr. Coombs death the former arrangement by which Stourton-Caundle was associated with Stalbridge has been resumed, but without an evangelist.

In 1895 Sir H. H. A. Hoare granted a new lease to trustees for

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\* The letter is among the Dorset Association papers.

a term of fifty years, from September 29th, 1894, at a rent of five shillings a year. Two restrictive clauses were inserted in this lease, which, though strongly objected to, were embodied in the legal document, viz :—1. That the chapel “shall not be used for political demonstrations or discussions or the like.” 2. That in the event of an Act of Parliament being passed enabling the trustees to purchase the freehold, the annual value shall be reckoned as £15. As soon as this new lease was arranged the Rev. A. O. Moore, assisted by the friends at Stalbridge, as well as by the zealous co-operation of the members of the congregation, set to work to raise funds (£50) for the renovation and re-seating of the building, which they succeeded in accomplishing, with the result that the chapel is now a most comfortable place of worship. Services are regularly held on Sunday afternoon and evening, and week-nights during the greater part of the year. The minister of Stalbridge (Rev. C. Harvey Cook) conducts the Sunday afternoon and week-night services, and zealous laymen those on Sunday evenings, whose efforts are much appreciated. It should be added that there is no other Nonconformist place of worship within several miles, and that owing to the smallness of the endowment of the parish Church there is no clergyman resident in the village. For many years the County Association has been the largest contributor towards the expense of this much-needed mission.

O.

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### STURMINSTER MARSHALL.

This village lies in the valley of the Stour, on the Somerset and Dorset Railway, and is four miles from Wimborne. The parish is large, containing a population of 809 persons. The living in the time of the Commonwealth was held by William Hardy, in place of Edmund Dickenson, sequestered, and by Thomas Tomkins, and though neither is found on the list of the ejected, we have some reason to believe that both were in sympathy with the Puritan movement, and clearly preached the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We find among the licenses issued in 1672, at the time of the King's Indulgence, the following : " The House of Henry Light, at Storminster Marshall, Dorsett, June 29th." And another license was taken out Sept. 5th. Among the trustees and attendants of the Blandford Chapel in 1711, we find the name of Robert Tite, Sturminster Marshall, yeoman. Later on a license was issued by Quarter Sessions : " 117, House called the Tiled House, Sturminster Marshall, Presbys., 13 July, 1736." Probably it was thus described, because the other houses in the village were covered with thatch. There still exists an ancient structure covered with ivy, supposed to be a part of the monastery, which is known as the " Tiled House ; " and it is most likely that here the services were held in 1736. The building has been turned into cottages, and one part is tumbling down. We are unable to discover by whom the services were conducted, or how long they were continued. On June 13th, 1818, a license was obtained for a " Building of John Bull, Sturminster Marshall, certified by John Bull, yeoman." In this place teaching and preaching were carried on for many years by the Congregationalists ; the building is now a cottage. For a long period the County Association paid £8 a year as rent for the place.

The church at Poole seems to have started the work, and for the most part to have carried it on. The Rev. T. Durant went out to preach once in the week, and three of the members (chiefly Messrs. Brown, Lankester, and Buckley) drove out every Sunday to teach the children, and conduct the services ; the communicants were received into the Poole Church, and numbered 30 in 1846, and 38 in 1852.

Sturminster was worked for many years in connection with Spetisbury. Messrs. Basley, Robjohns, and Palmer having charge successively of both places. (See Spetisbury).

Mr. Richard Hamer took a deep interest in the place, and often came over from Spetisbury to conduct the service. Seeing the pressing need of a new place of worship, he quietly purchased a plot of ground for a site, the only bit of freehold obtainable in the village, but he died in 1849, before it could be conveyed ; his daughter, however, Miss Hamer, now of Blandford, readily



carried out the wishes of her father, and upon the spot a chapel was erected in 1852. The trustees appointed from the congregation were Andrew Legg, grocer, Joseph Adams, dairyman, John Adams, yeoman, and H. Ayles, baker. Several friends advanced a sum of money to pay off the debt on the building: Messrs. M. Kemp-Welch, J. Lankester, A. Legg, E. R. Conder, Thomas Whicher, H. F. Fisher, and Miss Hamer lent £10 each; the Rev. T. Durant and family £30, Mr. Wm. Gollop £9 12s. 6d., and Messrs. John and Joseph Adams £5 each; total £119 12s. 6d. All was repaid except £25, which five of the lenders freely gave up in order that the debt might thus be extinguished.

Miss Hamer, among her many acts of thoughtful generosity in various directions, made a present to the congregation of a large cottage alongside the chapel, which is now occupied by the caretaker.

The Rev. W. W. Sherren, of Lytchett, undertook the oversight of Sturminster, and continued his services for five years, until his removal to Portland in 1867. Certain persons, as we learn from the Poole Church-book, were received into fellowship on Mr. Sherren's recommendation. Not long afterwards Sturminster became associated with the nearer church at Wimborne, and still remains under its care. Mr. Steel laboured as an evangelist for a short time, and Mr. Smith followed for about two years (1870-1), in this place, Longham, and other villages. The services at Sturminster, on alternate Sundays, were conducted by Messrs. Morgan, Housden, Purkis, Randall, and other friends from Wimborne.

Samuel Hillier, educated at the Bristol Institute, was appointed to this station about 1875; though genial and hard-working, he met with but little encouragement; he removed June, 1880, to New Quay, in Cornwall, where he died 1882. Mr. Frank King, of Wimborne, who had previously assisted in the Sunday school, was earnestly desired by the people to take charge of the place. Among Mr. King's assistants mention may be made of Messrs. Riley, Brett (Wimborne), Ralph (Poole), and as local helpers in the school Mr. G. Oxford, Mr. J. Jennings, Mrs. Sansom, Mrs. Reeves, and Mr. Henry Haysom. The attendance at school



and chapel considerably increased. A debt of nearly £20 on the premises was cleared off soon after Mr. Hillier's departure ; in 1885 the chapel was renovated at a cost £40, and in 1894 a raised platform was put in, costing nearly £11, both improvements being paid for at the time.

It was found necessary to build a schoolroom, but before this was done it was deemed prudent to raise a massive concrete wall to keep out the water in time of flood. In September, 1896, the corner stones were laid by Mrs. Bailey and Mrs. Massie, of Wimborne ; other stones were laid by Mrs. Reeves (in memory of her father, John Adams), Messrs. F. King, Arthur Reeves, and H. Haysom ; and a layer of bricks all round the foundation was laid by friends whose names appear on the church records. Outbuildings also were added, which are found useful. The whole work, including the re-lighting of the place with patent lamps, was finished in 1897. The total cost was about £120, nearly one half of which remains to be raised. The people have given according to their ability, some have supplied labour without charge, and doubtless the churches in the neighbourhood will gladly assist in freeing our friends from all debt.

All matters concerning the place are managed by a local committee, on which two members represent the church at Wimborne. The minister of Wimborne presides at the Lord's Supper, and is expected to take a Sunday service at least once in two months. The chapel has been licensed for marriages, and was first used for this purpose on Easter Tuesday last, the bride being Miss Lily Sansom, the organist. The Sunday School contains 65 children. There is a Band of Hope for the village, numbering 120, and a flourishing Temperance Society, both of which have their meetings on the chapel premises. A very good work is evidently being done ; the Superintendent, Mr. King, is untiring and self-sacrificing in his efforts ; and the people are united, earnest, and hopeful. May "the grace of God that bringeth salvation" be more widely known and heartily embraced in the village, that many, having the witness in themselves of conscious security, freedom, gladness and strength, may be fitted to bear witness for Christ in the world !

D.

## SWANAGE.

Swanage is a well-known and thriving health resort. Its beautiful bay, lofty hills, and bracing air make it an attractive spot, especially to such as have a wearied mind or an enfeebled body. The stone in which it abounds has been quarried from time immemorial, and has been largely used in various public structures ; the uppermost layer, known as "Purbeck Marble," which takes a fine polish, forms the graceful columns in many of our ecclesiastical buildings, and can be seen in its natural position on the cliff a few yards west of Peverel Point. The masses of Purbeck and Portland Rock at Tilly Whim present an imposing spectacle. An efficient steamboat service, during the summer, connects the town with Bournemouth and Weymouth, and gives access to various other places of interest on the coast.

The introduction of the gospel in connection with Nonconformity must be traced to the efforts of the Rev. Wm. Clark, minister at Wareham from 1670 to 1722. In the latter part of the 17th century Mr. Clark was accustomed to walk over to Swanage on a week day, and preach in a dwelling-house to the quarrymen and others, who were informed of his arrival by an understood signal. It is said that, at least on one occasion, he was closely pursued by his persecutors, and only escaped by secreting himself in one of the quarries. Another well-supported tradition of these troublous times is to the effect that some of the good people were wont to journey all the way to Poole to join in what they deemed scriptural worship ; they started early on the Lord's day, and drove in a covered cart to Ower, and from thence went on to Poole by boat.

John Bond, LL.D., a member of the well-known Purbeck family, who had been educated under the famous John White, at Dorchester, and followed him as minister of the Savoy, was deprived of his preferments at the Restoration ; he retired to Swanage, where he died 1676, and was laid in the family burying-place at Steeple.\* Dr. Bond must thus be classed with the

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\* Dictionary of National Biography.

ejected ministers, and was evidently in full sympathy with his brethren who suffered for conscience sake.

The first chapel was opened Aug. 15th, 1705, the minister, Rev. Jonathan Wheeler, preaching on the occasion from Neh. xiii. 14. The new building was certified, under the Toleration Act, by Walter Scott, James Thompson, Charlotte Weekes, Samuel Serrell, John Hayward, Anthony Serrell, and John Pushman, who, with the names to whom the site was conveyed, were doubtless at this time the leading adherents and supporters. Mr. Wheeler, who may be regarded as the first resident minister, was ordained Nov. 1705, and removed to a chapel known as "The Steps," at Tiverton, Oct. 1708. He died 1723; the inscription over his grave runs thus: "He was a man of extensive learning, exemplary piety, and ready to every good word and work. He was a judicious and laborious preacher, and a man of such extensive learning, sound sense and piety united, as the age had seldom produced." It may be added that the Meeting House was erected on a part of the garden belonging to the dwelling-house of John Stevens, who conveyed the land to trustees,\* October 24th, 1705.

Richard Darracott followed after a few years interval, a devout, learned, cultured man, qualified to shine in society and fill a high position, yet "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," and content to watch over a small church of plain people in an obscure country town. He kept a diary, and Dr. Bennett speaks of the happy hours spent in reading the records of his wisdom and piety. After eight years of faithful service he removed to Chulmleigh, North Devon, in 1722, where he died in the fortieth year of his age. Mr. Darracott married a Miss Risdon, whose grandfather on the mother's side was a sufferer for Christ in the reign of Charles I., and joined the Puritans in seeking a home where they might enjoy freedom of conscience across the Atlantic. The Darracotts and Risdons were ancient families in Bideford, and portraits of Mr. Darracott's ancestors, as mayors of the town, were said to be hung in the Guildhall. Mrs. Darracott

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\* Charles Weekes, Stephen Lock, William Seymour, James Thompson, Abraham Smith, Jonathan Wheeler, John Howard, and Nathaniel Clarke.

died in 1717, a few days after the birth of Risdon, her second child. The good minister at Poole, William Madgwick, came over to condole with his bereaved brother, and baptize the babe. The daughter became the wife of Mr. Clark, minister of Bow, North Devon, and Risdon, the son, a favourite pupil of Dr. Doddridge, enjoyed the friendship of Whitfield, Hervey, and other excellent men, and was pastor for eighteen years of the church at Wellington, Somerset, where he was highly esteemed and widely useful. Dr. James Bennett, so long minister at Romsey, married his grand-daughter, and published a memoir of him under the title "The Star of the West." The Dr. named one of his sons Risdon after this honoured ancestor, and that son became the eminent physician, Sir James Risdon Bennett; Risdon Darracott Sharp, Esq., solicitor, of Christchurch, also claims a relationship, which the name seems to imply. Richard Darracott took to himself a second wife; Hutchins tells us that on the register of marriages at Tyneham (also in the Isle of Purbeck), occurs the following: "Mr. Richard Darracott to Mrs. Lucy Thornhill, 1719," which no doubt refers to the good pastor at Swanage; but the marriage turned out disastrously, she proved herself an unworthy person, and he soon found it wise to leave the neighbourhood.

We have but scanty information concerning the successors of Mr. Darracott during the 18th century.

Richard Glanville came about 1723, and was pastor for twenty years; he received a grant of £5 from the Congregational Fund Board in 1739, and also in 1740. We can gather nothing further definitely about him. Mr. Whitaker filled the pastorate from 1743 to 1750, and during these years received an annual grant of £5 from the above named fund. He is believed to be the son of Robert Whitaker, ejected from Cambridge University, of whom Calamy says "He settled at Fordingbridge in Hampshire, where God blessed his ministry to the good of many souls. He left a son in the ministry among the Dissenters."\* The father, who was minister for 50 years at Fordingbridge, died in 1718, and the son seems to have succeeded him, anyhow, he is said to have

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\* Memorial, Vol. I., p. 270.

acted as pastor in 1727. John Copplestone followed for about two years (1751-2), and removed in 1753 to Nether Compton, near Sherborne; probably he is the same gentleman who was for a brief period at Bere Regis, and other places in the West of England. Dr. Copplestone, sometime late Bishop of Llandaff, was probably of the same family, as he is said to have been of Dissenting origin.

Mathew Twogood followed from about 1753 to 1757, in which year he died; he had been previously minister at Shepton Mallett and Poole, and was cousin to Micaiah Twogood, the well-known author of a popular work on Dissent.

John Morrison settled here as pastor from Alton, in 1757. The state of things in 1774 is thus described "The congregation is about 120, but poore, and scarce raise Mr. Morrison, who is growing old, more than £16 a year for himself and wife, and even that is in danger of being diminished by the attachment of his hearers of late to the Wesleyan Methodists."\* During his ministry he received an annual grant of £5 from the Congregational Fund. He seems to have resigned his charge in 1785 or the following year, and died November, 1787. It was probably in his time that the following incident occurred. A gay young clergyman, overhearing one of the members conducting family worship, violently kicked at the door. Some years after, when his views had undergone a great change, and he had become an earnest preacher of the gospel, he wrote to the minister expressing his regret for having misunderstood and spoken evil of his people, and especially for having disturbed one of them whilst at family worship.

William Sedcole succeeded and was ordained 1786. The following is an extract from John Wesley's journal, who, with Dr. Coke, was driven into the bay by stress of weather. "Swanage, 1787, Monday, Aug. 13th. In the evening I preached in the Presbyterian Meeting House, not often I believe so well filled, and afterwards passed half-an-hour very agreeably with the minister, in the Parsonage house which he rents, a neat retired house with a delightful garden." The Rector being a bachelor, occupied lodgings, and the rectory was let at this time to Mr.

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\* Hunter MSS., British Museum.



Sedcole. The congregation appears to have declined, and Mr. Sedcole resigned the pastorate and the ministry in 1806, and died March 1821.

John Collins, a native of Swanage, was brought up to the chief industry of the place, the quarrying and dressing of stone. After much conflict and anguish of mind, he found freedom and peace, and then, valuing the gospel for what it had done for himself, he sought every opportunity of commending it to others. The little Meeting-house where he attended being without a minister, he was induced, under some pressure, to conduct the services, first occupying the table pew and then the pulpit. For a time he followed his business, whilst preaching on the Sunday. Afterwards, he placed himself for eighteen months under the tuition of the Rev. T. Durant, of Poole, for whom he entertained the highest esteem. He was ordained in 1808. We learn from the Baptismal Register, deposited in Somerset House, that the Rev. David Ralph, of Wimborne, baptized children here from 1807 to 1810; indeed, the first entry by John Collins was not made till October 24th, 1815. It is probable that Mr. Collins, in the early years of his ministry, was assisted by Mr. Ralph and other friends. He was possessed of common sense, good natural ability, kindly disposition, and unwearied industry, all consecrated to the service of his Lord and Master. During his ministry, the congregation was united and prosperous. After a long illness, he passed to rest in 1833, and was buried in the churchyard, amidst marked demonstrations of respect and regret. It may be added that he was on very intimate and friendly terms with the Rev. T. O. Bartlett, the Rector of Swanage, who wrote a memorial acrostic, which is inscribed on the tombstone, and reads thus :

“ I speak not now the dead to praise,  
Or on this stone falsely to raise  
His name, whose bones lie mould’ring here,  
Nearer to dust year after year.  
Content am I with truth to say,  
Onward he paced his heav’nly way,  
Loving all those who sought the Lord,  
Loving all those who loved His Word ;

Instant in prayer, in doctrine sound,  
 No bigotry in him was found ;  
 So may we all in grace abound."

Robert Chamberlain became co-pastor in 1832, and the successor of Mr. Collins the following year. Educated at Hoxton Academy, he removed from Petworth, Surrey, and laboured at Swanage, with signal honour and success, for eighteen years. In December, 1834, eight of the members were appointed to go out two and two as evangelists into the outlying villages,\* showing that the pastor and the church were alive to the duty of extending the Kingdom of Christ. September 4th, 1835, the prayers of the church were desired on behalf of Joseph Smedmore, a member, who was accepted on probation for ministerial training at Coward College. After the completion of his studies, Mr. Smedmore became pastor of Bond Street Chapel, Leicester, as successor to Edward Miall, and sustained this important position honourably and usefully for many years. His latter days were spent chiefly in this, his native place ; he died at Sutton, in Surrey, in 1894.

The congregation had now so increased that a larger building was found necessary. A building committee was appointed ;† after an interval of successful canvassing for funds, and unsuccessful negotiations for the purchase of a few extra feet of land behind the meeting house, it was decided to rebuild on the old site ; the foundation stone was laid July 20th, 1837, by the Rev. James Brown, of Wareham, assisted by Mr. Marsh. The builders were Messrs. Smedmore and Spencer ; the late Mr. Geo. Gollop, of Poole, drew the plans, measured and valued the work done by the masons, carpenters, &c., to the entire satisfaction of the committee, and rendered these services gratuitously. The new building was opened January 10th, 1838, by sermons from the Revs. T. Adkins, of Southampton, and T. Durant, of Poole. The total cost (about £956) had been all defrayed in 1841, with a small

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\* Messrs. Weeks, Seymour, J. Collins, F. Bishop, F. Haysom, N. Spencer, S. Bonfield, and J. Haysom.

† R. Chamberlain, Samuel Marsh (deacon), Jos. Smedmore, Jos. Seymour (deacon), Wm. Butler, H. Gillingham, junr., J. S. Smedmore, F. Bishop, G. Butler, W. Trenchard, and Frank Haysom.

balance over, mainly through the untiring efforts of the pastor. The Rev. J. A. James, of Birmingham, who did not forget the churches of his native county, sent a donation of £20. During the ministry of Mr. Chamberlain the congregation was united, vigorous and flourishing. He filled the office of secretary to the Connty Association, in succession to Mr. Durant, for 10 years from 1840, and was much valued by his brethren and the churches. His removal in 1850 occasioned deep regret, and his memory is precious still. He took the oversight of a church at Falcon Cliff, in the Isle of Man, and died 1855 at Oakham. The deacons chosen February, 1842, were John Smedmore, Francis Haysom, and Isaac Haysom; Samuel Marsh, long a deacon, and for fifty years a pillar of the church, died the preceeding December.

John Collins Fairfax, from East Bergholt, Suffolk, became pastor 1850-3; he was afterwards at Oakham, and died at Ware, 1881.

Samuel Thodey Allen, trained at the Western College, became minister in 1854, removing to Birmingham, 1857. "He was very earnest and zealous, and had a short, but successful pastorate." In his time the schoolroom was built, and mostly paid for. Mr. Allen has recently retired, leaving an important charge at Yeovil, which he had honourably filled for many years.

Thomas Seavill, formerly at Wareham, became pastor in 1858. The following year an effort was made to establish day and evening schools. In 1861, ten brethren volunteered to assist in spreading the gospel in the villages. The deacons at this time were W. Collins and W. Hopkins (Studland). In 1862, the house with garden, adjacent to the schoolroom, was purchased at a cost of £130, for a master's residence. Mr. Seavill resigned from ill health, 1864.

George Hinds, from Rubery, Worcestershire, received an invitation in 1865, resigned 1871, and passed to rest at Wimbledon, 1896. "He was a man of simple habits and strong convictions; beautiful in his modesty, but bold in his opposition to wrong of every kind; with a firm, unflinching faith."\* There had been an

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\* Congregational Year Book, 1897.

unhappy state of things for some time, which culminated in a secession led by Mr. Seavill, and the "Mission Hall" was built in 1872. "Grievous heartburnings and recriminations were thus caused, and the church sank very low in numbers and influence."\*

Henri J. Le Fevre occupied the pulpit for twelve months.

Charles Chambers, from the Bristol Institute, became pastor in 1873, and was ordained August 27th, 1874. In this year a baptismal bowl, manufactured to match the communion plate was presented by Mr. Richard Brown. In 1876, a debt of £160 on the house, infant school, and for sundry repairs, was cleared off; the same year an organ was purchased which had been previously used in the parish church, and was opened by a service conducted by the Rev. J. Halsey, of Anerley Church, London. Mr. Chambers, full of zeal and energy, was much appreciated, especially by the young people; he removed in 1878 to Stockwell Green, London, and is now the popular pastor of the historic Stepney Meeting. J. S. Smedmore, who had been a deacon for many years, and for a time Superintendent of the Sunday school, died suddenly May 3rd, 1877, to the deep regret of the church, whose interests he had sought to advance in every way. It should be recorded that a plot of land, 117ft. long and 25ft. 9in. wide, not far from the chapel, was presented to the church by Mr. Smedmore's father as a burial ground.

F. A. Warmington afterwards became minister for about two years.

Thomas Richardson Steer was invited to become pastor in 1881, when things were in a depressed condition, and he was ordained April 27th, in the following year. In 1883, and the following year, there was a great spiritual awakening, which led to numerous accessions. The improvement in the seating in 1882 was the beginning of a thorough renovation of the chapel and school buildings, extending over about five years, and costing in the aggregate nearly £400, which was raised at the time. A capita manse was built in 1893, at a cost of £210 for land, and £790 for the house; a debt of £500 remains. The same year a valuable strip of land, adjoining the chapel property,

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\* Church records.

was purchased of the late Mr. George Burt, for the moderate sum of £50. The present building being insufficient, especially during the influx of visitors, vigorous efforts are being made to raise funds for the extension so urgently required.

The Sunday school is the largest in the town, numbering about 200, and has for Superintendent, Mr. F. Stephens.

The present deacons are Messrs. Meikle (also Treasurer), John Bowley, Keith Pittman, Wm. White, John D. White, and Edward B. Brown. There has been marked and encouraging progress, under the present excellent and hardworking pastor, who lives in the esteem and affection of the churches of the county, as well as of his own congregation.

D.

**Langton Matravers.**—This village, extending a considerable distance up the hill, is fitly named the “Long-town;” it lies about two miles distant, and has a mission station in union with the Swanage church.

The minister of this parish was one of the confessors of 1662, a Mr. John Mitchell, of whom Calamy writes “He was not only eminent in preaching, but he went from house to house doing good. All the inhabitants of the place honoured him, and some gentlemen in the neighbourhood, who were zealous for the Church of England, waited on the bishop, in order to his keeping in his living; but nothing would do without that entire conformity in which he could by no means be satisfied.” He further adds “Hutchins mentions Theophilus Polewheelee as incumbent here in the year 1650.”\* We know nothing further of Mr. Mitchell, but Mr. Polewheelee, a man of some note among the Puritans, was ejected at Tiverton, where he remained, and founded a Dissenting congregation. It appears that Mr. Christopher Lawrence was presented to the living by Sir Walter Erle in 1654, and removed in 1658 to Came, near Dorchester, where in 1662 he gave up his preferment for conscience sake. Thus within twelve years this village enjoyed the ministrations of three devout earnest

\* Calamy's Memorial II., p. 132.



preachers of the gospel, who gave proof of their sincerity and courage by the sacrifices they were ready to make.

Among the licenses issued by Quarter Sessions we find the following, "206, House of William Tubbs, Langton Matravers, Presbyterian, 4 Oct., 1774." In 1845 the County Association voted £3 towards the expense of holding services here. Doubtless in both cases such services were conducted by brethren from Swanage. For many years a small Baptist cause has existed here. In 1897 a little band of Christian people joined the church at Swanage, which provides help for the Sunday services, in the season visitors often assisting.

D.

## SYDLING ST. NICHOLAS.

This is a pleasant village, lying in a fertile valley, almost encircled by lofty chalk hills, about half way between Maiden Newton and Cerne Abbas. Formerly a glove factory existed here, but now the place is dependent entirely on agriculture.

We learn that when John Reed could no longer hear the gospel in the parish church at Maiden Newton, he took his family "over the hill to the village of Sydling, to a Sunday morning cottage meeting" (see "Maiden Newton"). This would probably be between 1760 and 1770. Mr. Reed seems to have been associated with Sydling in 1785, for among the names proposed as trustees for certain endowments at Cerne Abbas we find "John Reed, Sidlen." Among the licenses issued by Quarter Sessions this occurs: "209, house of Elizabeth Devenish, Sydling St. Nicholas, Presbys., 10 Jan., 1775." It is said of Philipps Mills, pastor at Dorchester from 1783 to 1793, "He went about doing good in the surrounding villages diffusing the sweet savor of the name of Christ in every place. At Sydling, a village eight miles from Dorchester, his occasional labours were remarkably blessed. When he first went there with an intention of preaching, some of the ungodly inhabitants from enmity to the gospel, made all the noise and uproar they could; but he

had not long preached there till several of the same persons stood with tears in their eyes, listening with attention to the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. In this village he was the instrument of raising a congregation of 200 persons, which increased so rapidly that they were obliged to build a new place of worship, which is well filled to this day." \* Hutchins says: "About 20 years ago, some Dissenters of the Independent domination formed a society and erected a meeting house in this parish. The congregation consists of about 150 members. The minister is supported by the joint contributions of the congregations here and at Cerne." A later edition says the meeting house was erected "about 1790." When service was not held at Sydling many of the people went over to worship at Cerne.

Mr. Inglethorpe seems to have been the first minister; he was here previous to 1798, but how long he laboured we know not.

Joseph Gambole came 1798, and was ordained over the recently formed church, April 23rd, 1799. "Many people were collected from various parts, and 17 ministers." † He seems to have sought the healing of the body as well as the soul, for "he had a great medicine called Gambole's restorative tea." He did not remain long. The Rev. J. Lamb, of Cerne, had charge also of Sydling from 1802-4. A Mr. John Lloyd, from Lymington, was here in 1803, but probably as a temporary supply only.

Henry Besley, educated at Axminster, was invited to be minister in 1804, remaining three years; he went from here to Iminster, and thence to Ilfracombe, where he was the respected and successful pastor of the Congregational church for 30 years. He died 1860. We can find no trace of a resident minister for some years after Mr. Besley.

Samuel Devenish settled probably in 1814, and was ordained March 21st, 1815, the Revs. Dr. Cracknell, Saltern, Small (tutor) and Weston taking the chief parts of the service. Mr. Devenish's career was unhappily brief; he died from an attack of paralysis, November 2nd, 1826, aged 43, leaving a numerous family. "He

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\* *Evangl. Mag.*, 1796.

† See *Evangl. Mag.*, 1799.

was an excellent christian, and much beloved by all who knew him."\* The Devenish families were among the founders and early supporters of the meeting house. The name occurs frequently in the parish registers, and on the gravestones in the churchyard, during the latter part of the last century and the beginning of this. We have an account of the happy death and good influence on the family of John, son of Matthew Devenish, Sydling, in his 18th year.† A Matthew Devenish occupied Huish Farm, and another family of the name held a large farm at Upper Sydling, both families being steadfast adherents of the little cause. The earliest recorded place of worship was, as we have seen, the house of a lady bearing this name. Samuel, the minister afore mentioned, was doubtless related to these families; the late Matthew Devenish, of Dorchester, was his first cousin, and no doubt one reason why he took such special and generous interest in Sydling chapel was because his relatives had been associated with the place. Mr. Charles Critchell is mentioned as a member of the dissenting community in 1785. The Pettys, families in a good position, were friendly to the cause, and attended occasionally, if not regularly. Mrs. Newman, mother of the brewer, who had been associated with the Bingham family and valued evangelical principles, identified herself with the little church, and assisted in its work. Mrs. Dunning also was often found among the worshippers.

Charles Gribble supplied the pulpit during 1827, and perhaps for a longer period. In April, 1836, the County Association made "a grant of £6 10s. od. to retain Mr. Smithers," but he did not remain long, for there was no minister in 1837. John Bishop was here in 1839-40, but we know not accurately his length of service. T. L. Lamb, who had been a member of the church at Nicholas Street, Weymouth, took the oversight for some time up to 1845. From 1847 to 1857 this place was worked in connexion with Maiden Newton. The old chapel, a somewhat lofty and spacious building, now used as the National Day School, fell into hand on the death of the last life, and the congregation were required, rather peremptorily, forthwith to take the fittings and depart.

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\* Evang. Mag., 1826.

† Ditto, 1798, p. 215.

In 1834 a freehold site was given for a new chapel by Samuel and Matthew H. Devenish and their sister Eliza, and the present building was erected and paid for.\* The deacons in 1837 were Henry Croad and John Hopkins.

Mr. Hallett, who died October 1839, bequeathed for the support of the chapel services the sum of £261 7s. 6d. in consols. and a mortgage (£60) on a house in Sydling. The bequest, found to be void under the Act of Mortmain, was claimed by the other legatees, and nothing was done to fulfil the pious wishes of the testator.

John Thomas Smith, on retiring from Nicholas Street, Weymouth, took up his residence in 1860 at Sydling, and was pastor of this place and Cerne. He preached usually three times on the Sunday, on each Thursday evening at Cerne, and often in the surrounding villages. He conducted a large adult Bible Class at Sydling, established a Day School at Cerne, and was instrumental in raising new chapels at Castle Hill and Grange. Though an elderly man he was singularly active and laborious, and his faithful services are gratefully remembered. He removed in 1870 to Dorchester, and died two years after.

Walter Fry was encouraged and aided by Mr. Smith to enter the ministry; he was trained in the Bristol institute, and is now pastor of a church in America. Mr. James House, who had assisted Mr. Smith from 1863, succeeded him, and is still the pastor evangelist. The present deacons are Robert Spriggs and Esau Miles. The attendants number about 70. The difficulty in preparing this sketch has been seriously increased by the entire absence of church records. The gospel, set forth in its freeness and fulness, has proved the power of God unto salvation to many souls in this parish, and there is need still for the clear teaching of the New Testament truth, that salvation depends not on the holding of a certain creed, or the observance of certain rites, or union with any particular church, but on simple faith in the merits and promises of our Saviour and obedience to His commands. D.

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\* The local Trustees, probably all attendants, were Wm. Devenish the Elder, Bradford Peverell, gent.; James Devenish, Sydling, gent.; Mat. H. Devenish, Sydling, bookseller; Wm. Devenish, Sydling, gent.; John Petty, Frome St. Quinton; and Richard Dore, Sydling, miller.

### THREE CROSS.

This hamlet formed part of the vast parish of Cranborne, and is situated about two miles north of West Moors station; the aspect is somewhat bleak, and though many parts are now cultivated, there are still extensive heaths; the holdings are mostly on a lifehold tenure.

More than 70 years ago the Baptists held occasional services, and afterwards the Primitive Methodists took up the work, but were unable to continue it. The attention of the Congregational Church at Ringwood was then especially called to this hamlet by Mr. George Orman, a resident, as being in a state of spiritual destitution, having no place of worship, and it was resolved to send the gospel to the people, but the movement was at first very unpopular among them, interfering as it did with their usual way of spending the Sabbath in drinking and fighting, and the first Evangelists were pelted. Mr. Savage, who died at Ringwood February the 19th, 1898, aged 98, was one of the first of these zealous preachers, and about 60 years ago he was able to secure for a while the services of Mr. John Corbin, then a student at Highbury College, and afterwards, for a long period, the honoured pastor of Hornsey-park Chapel, London. A congregation was gathered in the humble mud building, which is still standing, though disused. The services were conducted chiefly by friends from Ringwood.

As the attendance increased a larger and better structure was found necessary, and this was provided mainly by the generosity of Miss Carter, of Ringwood. A leasehold site at a small rental was granted by the good Lord Shaftesbury, and a new chapel erected, which was opened November 19th, 1861, the Rev. J. O. Jackson, pastor at Ringwood, preaching on the occasion. The people gave according to their ability, besides rendering substantial help by hauling materials and giving labour. The total cost, about £170, was met chiefly by Miss Carter, and no debt remained. The work still progressed, all residents in the hamlet, with but few exceptions, frequented the little chapel, which



became overcrowded, and again the need of a larger building was felt ; the friends set to work and wisely collected a considerable sum, nearly £170, before committing themselves to any outlay. A site by the main road was obtained from W. Rolles Fryer, Esq., lord of the manor, on easy terms, for the lives of Wm. Hatchard, Stephen Orman, and Jesse Stickland, with the promise of renewal. The contract for the building was taken by Messrs. Barrett and Wareham, and the foundation-stone was laid by Gilbert D. Jennings, Esq., of London (who has kindly supplied valuable matter for this sketch), August 1890.

The opening services were held May 19th, 1891 ; Mr. Fryer, to show his sympathy with the work, opened the doors of the new building, and afterwards said a few words of kindly interest and hearty congratulation, expressing the hope that the place would be the centre of many agencies for the good of the neighbourhood ; the Rev. J. Ossian Davies, of Bournemouth, preached an eloquent and quickening sermon from John xxi. 15 : "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me," &c. ; the public meeting in the evening was presided over by Mr. Jennings, and addressed by various ministers and friends. Mr. Savage, the pioneer of the work at Three Cross, was able to be present, though in his 91st year, and excited the deepest interest as he related reminiscences of his visits during the past sixty years. The attendance was very crowded, and a most earnest hopeful feeling prevailed. The sum of £80 remained to be paid at the close of the day, and towards this the chairman promised the last £10. Death had removed Miss Carter (1883), a firm and liberal friend, who had rendered invaluable help in various ways, and her nephew also, Mr. Reginald Jennings, who carried on her work as far as he could, and had at heart the extension of Christ's Kingdom in the world. A tablet has been placed over the rostrum with the inscription : "In memory of Reginald Jennings, Esq., for many years the valued friend of the people of this village, who departed this life suddenly, March, 1890. 'The name of the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.'—Ps. cxii. 6."

Other friends came forward, however, to render assistance, and the handsome and substantial building, which cost about £360,

was quite paid for by 1894. It should be added that, as on a former occasion, several of the people rendered good service by personal labour, and hauling materials, free of charge.

Mr. Chamberlin is the hard-working faithful pastor of this place as well as of Verwood, taking the services here once a fortnight; the alternate Sundays being supplied by friends, chiefly from Bournemouth.

A Day School, on the British system, which was formerly supported mainly by Miss Carter, and, after her decease, by Mr. R. Jennings; is still continued, and numbers about 50 pupils, the old chapel making a suitable room for the purpose. A Night School was held for some winters, and was well attended. A two-stalled stable, for the convenience of those who drive to the services, has recently been built and paid for. The Sunday School numbers 54, with Mr. Barrett as superintendent, and a Band of Hope has 40 members. The present deacons are Geo. Hatchard, Charles Orman, John Joy, and Charles Lockyer.

The population is scattered, and the district somewhat dreary and barren, but the people seem fairly prosperous, and have a good deal of independence, living as they do, mostly, at small rentals, on their own leasehold plots, which they or their fathers enclosed from the surrounding wastes. The chapel has been the source and centre of holy and gracious influences, and to the ministrations therein, under the divine blessing, must be largely ascribed the improvement in the morals and manners of the people.

D.

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## UPWEY.

This is a charming district; sheltered by lofty hills from the cold winds, open to the genial south, with Weymouth and Portland in view: it abounds in rich pastures, orchards, and market gardens; its scenery is bold and varied, and its valley, with the famous "Wishing Well," very beautiful. The visitors in summer are numerous, and much building is going on.

Zealous preachers of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion laboured

in the district in the latter part of the last century. Mr. Thomas Molland, a student from Trevecca College, about 1775, included Upwey in his visits. An amusing description of the opposition he encountered at Broad Mayne and other places, and of the freedom with which he denounced his adversaries, in speech and pamphlet, is given in "Methodism in Dorset," p. 68. A good man, John Barlow, came from Yeovil to reside in the village at the close of the last century, but there seems to have been no regular service at that period, for he attended the preaching and joined the church at Nicholas Street, Weymouth, though occasionally walking in to hear the Rev. Philipps Mills, at Dorchester.\*

The Rev. B. Cracknell, minister at Weymouth, seems to have resided for a time in the village, for on Oct. 5th, 1802, he took out a license for the house occupied by himself at Upwey in which to hold service according to the usages of the Independents. George Wood, Esq., fitted up a room in one of his cottages about 1807 or 1808, and a Thursday evening service was conducted by the Congregational ministers of Weymouth. The attendance increasing, and the room being incommodious, Mr. Wood erected, on his own land, and at his sole expense, a chapel, which was opened Dec. 13th, 1810, the Rev. R. Keynes, of Blandford, preaching in the morning from Ps. lxxxiv. 4, and Dr. Cracknell in the evening from Mat. xvi. 26. Service henceforward was held on the Sunday evening, and failing a preacher, Mr. Wood read a sermon. Occasional help was received from summer visitors at Weymouth, among whom may be named Mr. Jay, of Bath, and Dr. Haweis, rector of Aldwinkle. Mr. Wood, to whom the cause is so deeply indebted, and who was held in high esteem by all who knew him, died in 1826, aged 81. Mrs. Wood, at an early period, with a few helpers, began a Sunday School, at that time very needful, for many of the children could not read.

In 1827, F. W. Meadows, afterwards at Portland, supplied Upwey and other village stations, with much acceptance and success, though his stay was brief.

E. Russ, in 1832, was engaged to preach at Nicholas Street on

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\* Memoir Evan. Mag. 1828.

Sunday afternoon, and at Upwey in the evening, also once in the week, but he remained only twelve months. The expenses up to this time were all defrayed by Mr. Wood and his son George, who afterwards resided at Athelhampton Hall, and was the founder of the Congregational Church at Puddletown.

The first entry in the church book runs thus: "On the 1st of May, 1838, a church, consisting of ten members (Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Old, Mrs. Darke, transferred from Nicbolas street, Mrs. Roper, Mr. French, Mrs. French, Mrs. Mussell, Mrs. Cox, Mr. Joseph Groves, and James Le Couteur), was formed in the Independent Chapel, Upwey, by the Rev. R. Keynes. The following is the covenant to which the members have agreed:—We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, having, we hope by the grace of God, first given ourselves to Him, do voluntarily and in the fear of the Lord, give ourselves by the will of God to one another; that we may walk together in christian love and fellowship in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless.

We also declare that Mr. James Le Couteur is voluntarily chosen our minister and pastor.

We also declare that Mr. Joseph Groves is voluntarily chosen our deacon."

James Le Couteur, the first pastor, was born in the island of Jersey; his friends wished him to enter the medical profession, but his own desire was for the ministry. After a course of private tuition, and some experience in village preaching, he settled at Upwey, and was ordained May 2nd, 1838. The chief parts of the ordination service were taken by the following ministers:—The Rev. H. J. Crump, of Weymouth, delivered the introductory discourse on the nature of a christian church; the Rev. J. Anderson, of Dorchester, proposed the usual questions, and received from Mr. Le Couteur an impressive and gratifying statement of the circumstances which, under God, led to his conversion, and subsequent choice of the ministry; the Rev. R. Keynes offered the ordination prayer with the laying on of hands, and also gave the charge to the young minister from II Tim. iv. 5. In the evening, the Rev. G. H. Davis, Baptist minister of Weymouth, preached an appropriate sermon to the people from the words,

"Take heed, therefore, how ye hear."\* Mr. Le Couteur remained eight years. After brief pastorates elsewhere, he became minister at Wellington, Somerset, where he laboured for 20 years, till the end, in 1869. He was a gentle, unassuming, devout servant of Jesus Christ, and was held in much esteem and affection by the churches with which he had been associated.

S. Barling became pastor in 1846, and resigned 1851. Like his predecessor he had charge of Abbotsbury, and the members from that place were received into the Upwey church.

Charles Gowar succeeded in 1853, and after eight years service removed to Thatcham, in Berkshire, where he died 1887. "He was a man of sterling worth, of sincere and unobtrusive piety. He had a sound judgment, held his opinions firmly, but expressed them with moderation."†

Andrew Perkins, after useful work in Devon and Somerset villages, became pastor in 1861, and laboured with comfort and success till his decease in 1870. He was an earnest, sensible man, understanding the people, and in close sympathy with them.

Joseph Price, educated at the Bristol Institute, who followed in 1870, left for Nayland, Suffolk, in 1874, and is now at Wigton, in Cumberland. During the pastorate of Mr. Price the chapel was enlarged and improved at a cost of £145.

When Mrs. Wood, who had been so closely associated with the early history of the place, died at Athelhampton Hall, February 10th, 1855, the church remembering her unfailing services in the past, sent a letter of sympathy to her son, Mr. Wood. By Mr. Wood's decease in March, 1867, a generous friend was lost, as, for many years, he had contributed £40 per annum towards the support of the minister. The anxieties of the people were however somewhat relieved by assistance from Mr. Wood's relatives, and by additional efforts among themselves.

John Shadrack Butcher became pastor in 1875. In 1880, and largely through Mr. Butcher's efforts, the present beautiful and spacious church was reared. A freehold site was purchased

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\* Evangl. Mag., 1838.

† Congl. Year Book, 1888.



for £145, in a central position. Mr. R. C. Bennett, of Weymouth, prepared the plans; and Mr. Patten, of Portland, took the contract. The foundation stone was laid June 16th, 1880, by J. J. Norton, Esq., of Poole, who gave £20 to the building fund. The opening services were held May 18th, 1881; the Rev. Dr. J. G. Rogers (Clapham), preaching from Rom. xiv., 7-8; and a crowded meeting was held in the evening, presided over by the late Dr. Williams, of Sherborne. The old chapel was sold for £190 to Sir Richard Howard; certain persons, members of Mrs. Wood's family, who had an interest in it to the extent of £50 each, generously waived their rights, and thus the whole of the purchase money became available for the new church. Mr. Butcher speaks in the highest terms of Mrs. Samson (the daughter of Mr. Wood, Sen.), as a friend every way to the cause, and to himself. She gave freely towards the cost of the new building, and the stained glass window was put in at her expense in memory of her father and mother. The total liabilities, amounting to £1900, were soon discharged.

Mr. W. Devenish, several times mayor of Weymouth, and the father of William Devenish, the liberal benefactor to our county Association, resided for some years in the village, actively supported the little chapel, and took a deep interest in the spread of the gospel in the district.

Mr. and Mrs. Homer (a sister of Mrs. Samson), of Martins-town, were received into the fellowship of the church, 1867.

Mr. Butcher, whose ministry had been much valued, removed in December, 1883, to Buntingford, and is now pastor at Great Chishill, Essex.

Frederick Beckley, for many years the honoured minister at Sherborne, and afterwards at Vineyard's Chapel, Bath, took charge of Upwey in 1884, but the infirmities of age induced him to resign in 1888, and he died the following year.

William Griffiths, M.A., who had filled the pastorate at Great Yarmouth for many years with great acceptance, was invited to Upwey in 1888, and is the minister still. In 1892, a convenient Manse, with a fine prospect westward, was erected. The land adjoining the chapel property was purchased, through Mr.

Bowditch, for £120, and the total cost amounted to £515. A sum of money, supposed to have been raised some years ago for a similar object, was applied to the Manse fund; a bequest by the late Mrs. W. Smith, of £25, was used for the same purpose; a large proportion of the expense, however, was borne by the pastor himself; anyhow the house is free of debt.

Mr. Daniel Mussell, who had rendered valuable service, whilst the Church and Manse were building, by his practical skill in the oversight of the work, and who died August 12th, 1895, gave by will £200 towards the support of the minister for the time being. Mrs. Thomas, who died March, 1896, widow of a former deacon, bequeathed £100 for the same object. The rental of a garden (£5) is also handed over, through Miss Samson, towards the minister's stipend.

Few villages have such an attractive and capacious Nonconformist sanctuary; provision has been made for an increase of population; and there is ample space for school and class rooms, when required. Much solid, durable work is being done by the esteemed pastor and his devoted wife, and the future is full of promise.

D.

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**Coryates.**—In this hamlet, there is an out station connected with Upwey. The school-room was built in 1846, and Christian work began soon afterwards. Lay brethren from Upwey and Abbotsbury conduct a service on Sunday evenings, with the kind permission of Mr. Samson, to whom the building belongs. The Upwey minister presides at the Lord's Supper once in three months. He also often preaches on a week night. A practical connexion with the church at Upwey has been kept up from the first.

D.

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## VERWOOD.

This hamlet which was formerly part of the extensive parish of Cranborne, has a station on the Salisbury and Wimborne Railway, and contains a considerable though very scattered

population. The district abounds in clay used for the making of bricks and coarse earthenware. At the close of the last century it was a wild neglected district, quite destitute of the means of grace ; whole families lived and died without being able to read the Scriptures, or hear the gospel preached. For some years two or three plain christians, and occasionally a minister, held forth the word of life, and not without some tokens of success.

A friend, whose name does not transpire, seeing the spiritual darkness and indifference that prevailed, was moved to erect a small place of worship, which was opened December 27th, 1802, Messrs. Lewis, of Ringwood, and Loader, of Fordingbridge, preaching on the occasion.\*

John Adams, the first pastor, though a man of little education, and in humble circumstances, was not lacking in ability or readiness of speech, indeed he had no small measure of native genius, and his shrewd sayings passed into proverbs among the simple country folk. He was well adapted to the place, for he understood the character and habits of the people. By his labours, many souls were quickened and many lives reformed. He remained the honoured pastor till his decease, January 27th, 1830, aged 77.

"September 23rd, 1819, a meeting was opened in Verwood, in the parish of Cranborne, Dorset, capable of holding 200 persons. Mr. Durant, of Poole, preached in the morning, and Mr. Priestly, of Fordingbridge, in the afternoon to a numerous and most attentive audience. The hearers are in general very poor ; the labours of their worthy pastor, who has been greatly blessed among them, have for many years been gratuitous, and having done their utmost they must look to the benevolence of the neighbouring churches towards the liquidation of the small debt upon the place."† The new chapel was built on a site leased at a nominal rent by the late Wm. Fryer, Esq., of Wimborne.

Jeremiah Argyle succeeded Mr. Adams. Born at Dorchester, and brought to the knowledge of the truth among the Wesleyans at Weymouth, he came to reside at Verwood about the year 1818, and pursued his trade as a whitesmith. He often assisted

\* See *Evangel. Mag.*, 1803, p. 173.

† *Evangel. Mag.*, 1820, p. 78.

Mr. Adams, and eventually was chosen to fill his place. Soon afterwards he was ordained, Mr. Durant, who had guided his studies, taking the chief part in the service. Amid many trials and difficulties, he was ever patient and hopeful, anxious to acquit himself as a faithful steward. During the last two or three years of his life the prospects of the place brightened. He died suddenly in 1858, aged 76, and was buried near his friend Adams. "A large number came to pay the last tribute of respect to one whose meek and quiet spirit, and unpretending consistent deportment, were known to all." \*

David Brewer, who had supplied the chapel at Damerham for many years with much profit to the people, was chosen pastor, and filled the office till his death, June 28th, 1861. Like his predecessors, though a plain man, of little culture, and earning a living by the sweat of his brow, he was marked by earnest piety, good common-sense, and a large share of natural ability.

Wm. Clark, Esq., of Ringwood, though holding Arian opinions, was much interested in the work at Verwood; he often rode over, a distance of five miles, to join in the worship; the simple earnest preaching of John Adams and Jeremiah Argyle had a charm for him; and he bequeathed the sum of £300, now invested in consols, towards the support of the minister for the time being. In the year 1843 a tablet was erected in the chapel to commemorate Mr. Clark's generosity.

Mr. Atley took the oversight in 1863 for about two years; Mr. Joseph Barker followed in 1865, for about the same term; Mr. James Pope came in 1867, remaining till 1875; and from that time, Mr. Samuel Chamberlin, of Plumley Farm, near Ringwood, has been the esteemed pastor of this place and Three Cross. Probably not one of the ministers had any special training, several of them, partly at least, supported themselves by secular occupation, but they were godly men, in close sympathy with their people, wise to win souls, and doing much good work for the Master—a state of things, which according to Dr. Hatch, accords with primitive usage, Dr. Hatch says: "There is no early trace of the later idea that buying and selling, handicraft and farming, were in

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\* Memoir Congl. Year Book, 1859.



themselves inconsistent with the office of a Christian minister. The Bishops and Presbyters of these early days kept banks, practised medicine, wrought as silversmiths, tended sheep or sold goods in open market. . . . The point about which the Christian communities were anxious was, not that their officers should cease to trade, but that in this, as in other respects, they should be ensamples to the flock.'\*"

The chapel having fallen into decay and being deemed unsafe, a new building was necessary; the lord of the manor, W. Rolles Fryer, Esq., leased a suitable site on favourable terms; and the memorial stone was laid August 19th, 1877, by the Rev. J. O. Jackson, as representing Miss Carter, of Ringwood, the chief contributor to the undertaking. The opening took place on Easter Monday, 1878; in the afternoon, the Rev H. H. Carlyle, LL.B., of Southampton, preached an admirable sermon from 1 Cor. iii., 9, "Ye are God's building," and in the evening a crowded and enthusiastic meeting was held. The total cost of the attractive and substantial building with schoolroom at the rear, was about £600, and thanks mainly to Miss Carter, the whole was paid within three or four years. The zealous and beneficent efforts of Miss Taylor, "The Lady in the Donkey Chaise," some 20 years and upwards ago, are gratefully remembered by many; she was active in holding Mothers meetings, Bible Classes, forming Bands of Hope, helping in temperance work, and there are abiding results. Two young men, Messrs. Montague Mather and Robert Bennett, about this time were engaged in evangelistic work through the district, from which good results followed. Mr. Mather gathered a number of devout souls for prayer on the morning of the day the chapel was opened, and by his efforts the harmonium was secured. Mention should be made of Thomas Fry, a man of high character, and much influence, whose loss by death, December 9th, 1888, was deeply felt. He had filled the office of deacon for many years, and with him were associated Robert Sherring and Joseph Andrews. Miss Carter, to whom Verwood, Three Cross, and other places are deeply indebted, started a British school, and supported it

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\* "Organisation of the Early Christian Churches," p. 148.



till her decease in 1883 ; afterwards her nephew, Reginald Jennings, Esq., whose memory is precious, and who rendered unfailing assistance to this and other village stations, mainly carried on the school, and at his death in 1890 it was deemed wise to accept the government grant. It is now managed by a United Committee with G. D. Jennings, Esq., as chairman, and is in a prosperous condition. The school, held on the chapel premises, has 112 children on its books, is conducted by a master and infant school mistress, and has been of vast benefit to the neighbourhood.

Two cottages built on the chapel property were handed over as a gift by Miss Carter, and the rent is applied towards the support of the place and the minister.

There exists a United Temperance Society and Band of Hope with 65 members, and a Rechabite Tent in the village numbers 80 adults and 60 juveniles. The present deacons are Messrs. Job Brewer, John Stickland, Jesse Sims (also superintendent of Sunday school), and Lot Oxford.

The aged pastor, referring to the loss of former helpers, remarks : "God buries his workmen, yet through storm and sunshine carries on his work." Yes, the work is His, and He can raise up others to fill the place of those who are summoned away. The above sketch sets forth how much has been done by the Congregationalists during the last hundred years for the best interests of the people of this district, and for a long period they were alone in the field. Our friends have reason to thank God and take courage.

D.

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## V E N N .

Anyone travelling along the road from Winsham to Lyme Regis by way of Racedown Lodge, ever memorable as the home of Wordsworth and his sister, where in 1797 he and Coleridge met, the house of which Miss Wordsworth wrote that it was "the place dearest to my recollection in the whole world, it was the first home I had,"\* will notice, as he nears the highest point of

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\* Literary Hist. of Eng., i, 270.

the road, a lonely, modest, but well-kept place of worship, standing in a graveyard. This is Venn chapel. Looking westward he may see the village of Thorncombe, a mile or more away on the other side of the valley, and eastward, behind the chapel, he sees a wild, picturesque height, surmounted by a few wind-torn trees, called Blackdown. In this district, as has already been shown in the preceeding pages,\* Nonconformity was early at work. Other places of worship, such as that at Blackdown, just over the hill, and Winsham, just across the border of Somerset, seem to have for a long time met the needs of the scanty and scattered population. At length, however, with the growth of the cloth factories, several of which grew up in the neighbourhood, the want was felt of a more convenient chapel, and a place of worship, belonging to the Particular Baptists, which was originally called Venn Chapel, but later became known as 'Old Venn Chapel,' was built a short distance from the present chapel. For some years this met the requirements of the people. But in 1816, at which time the cloth industry was in a flourishing condition, Mr. George Trenchard, who owned the central and largest factory, that at Chaffeigh, and also owned and cultivated a large part of the surrounding land, agreeing with his neighbours that the doctrine and accommodation of the old chapel had ceased to meet their needs, gave a plot of land on which to build a new chapel. The matter was taken up with enthusiasm, poor women and children set to work to gather stones for the building, the farmers hauled them to the place, and all the chief people in the neighbourhood joined with Mr. Trenchard in defraying all the expenses connected with the building, which was speedily completed. In consequence of their having contributed to the erection, most of the principal inhabitants claimed to have pews assigned to them in the chapel. The form of worship originally observed was a compromise between that usual in Dissenting and Church of England places of worship. It was agreed that the Prayer Book should be read one part of the Sunday, and a plain Nonconformist service be held the other part of the day. This arrangement lasted for some years, and would have lasted longer

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\* See pages 128,9-63-70.

had not the Church of England party attempted to set aside the agreement and introduce the Prayer Book at both services. Disappointed in their project they left the chapel and built the Chapel of Ease at Blackdown, on the site of the old Presbyterian meeting house.\*

It may be interesting to note that the minister of the meeting house at Blackdown, which was probably founded by the Rev. John Pinney, ejected from Broadwindsor, on the family property and never conveyed to trustees, became Arian, with the usual consequences that the congregation dwindled to almost nothing. The Rev. Joseph Keech appears to have been minister in 1734, removing afterwards to Ilminster. As far as can be ascertained he was followed by the Rev. Joseph Russell, who in turn was succeeded by the Rev. Joseph Paul, educated under Dr. Dodderidge,† and who had previously been minister of Waytown. Of Mr. Paul, who was here in 1775, we read, "he is the present minister of Blackdown, about five miles from Chard, a very small congregation, where he uses the Liverpool liturgy."‡ This liturgy was prepared by three eminent Arian ministers in Lancashire, and was used in Liverpool, where "some wealthy Dissenters, either ashamed of the simplicity of their fathers' worship, or expecting to attract some dissatisfied members of the English Church to what might seem to them a corrected edition of their own formularies, erected an octagon chapel, and introduced their reformed liturgy."§ It proved an utter failure. "The chapel was sold to a clergyman, who had it licensed for 'the genuine worship of the Church of England.'"§ The same liturgy seems to have proved a stepping-stone in the same direction at Blackdown.

The people at Venn never attempted to have a settled minister, but at first put themselves under the care of that most earnest and successful minister, the Rev. John Durnford, of Winsham. At a later period the place became associated with the church at Broadwindsor, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. James Cheney, who was doing a very successful work in the district.

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\* See page 170, Note.

† Add. MSS. Brit. Mus., 24,442.

‡ Thompson MSS., Vol. ii.

§ Halley's Lancashire Puritanism and Nonconformity, p. 500.

Soon after those who had desired the Prayer Book to be used to the exclusion of free prayer had seceded, another trouble arose in the little community, which for a time caused it to separate from Broadwindsor. About this period it appears that the original chapel, occupied by the Baptists, had so fallen into decay, that the roof had collapsed. When this happened, Mr. Hugh Trenchard, as successor of Mr. George Trenchard, who had passed away, claiming to be the owner of Venn Chapel, which was built on land given by his father, but never conveyed to trustees, put the place at the disposal of Mr. Dunster, the minister of the Baptist chapel, and his little flock for Sunday evenings, as the ordinary congregation did not hold any service in the evening. This was resented by Mr. Cheney, who wrote in the Broadwindsor Church Book the following :—

“ Discontinuance of Services at Venn Chapel.

“ Mr. Trenchard having engaged with Mr. Dunster to supply the Pulpit on Sabbath evenings, such arrangement was not approved, as it did not appear convenient. Therefore the Rev. J. Cheney discontinued to supply that place and preached for the last time on Sunday afternoon, July 7th, 1850, having occupied the pulpit during a period of nine years, *i.e.*, from July 18th, 1841.

JAMES CHENEY.”

The place now fell wholly into the hands of Mr. Dunster, who provided for all the services. The arrangement was not, however, satisfactory, and one of the first to be dissatisfied with it, and especially with Mr. Dunster's very high Calvinistic teaching, was Mr. Trenchard himself, who ceased to attend at Venn, and sometime after Mr. Bater's appointment, as successor to Mr. Cheney, began to drive over with his family to Broadwindsor on Sunday. So much was Mr. Trenchard edified by Mr. Bater's services, which were highly appreciated in the neighbourhood, and greatly blessed,\* that he determined to attempt to restore the connection between Venn and Broadwindsor. With this object in view he approached Mr. Bater, who was quite willing to add Venn to his charge upon two conditions ; first, that the chapel was vacated by the people using it (though he distinctly declined having anything to do with dispossessing them) ; and

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\* See page 65.



second, that Mr. Trenchard should make over any rights he had to the chapel to the Congregational body. This last Mr. Trenchard promised to do, in a letter to Mr. Bater; and he gave notice to Mr. Dunster that his services would no longer be required, upon which he and his friends retired, and built a new chapel in which their successors still worship.

Mr. Bater was greatly assisted by an evangelist, Mr. William Hawkins, who lived at Venn, and whose salary was for some years provided by a gentleman in the adjoining county, whose praise is in all the churches, and who desired and, we presume, still desires, for he yet lives, that his name should not be made public. From the time Mr. Bater took the oversight of the place, Venn Chapel has been under the superintendence of the successive ministers of Broadwindsor, who have given as much personal service as possible, and arranged for supplies in their own absence. Mr. Hawkins, who was a man of uncommon intelligence, shrewd sense and unaffected piety, which won and retained the respect and affection of all who knew him, conducted most of the services until his last illness and death in 1889. He married a Miss Trenchard, by whom he had a large family. One by one most of his children faded away just as they grew to manhood and womanhood. He nursed them tenderly, and then quickly and quietly followed them. A tablet in the chapel reads: "In loving memory of William Hawkins, who fell asleep in Jesus, Dec. 9th, 1889, aged 53 years. This tablet was erected by voluntary contributions from members of this church, amongst whom he faithfully laboured 29 years." Since then the place has been been admirably supplied by volunteers, some of whom have come long distances to serve the Master in this lonely but lovely spot, and have gone back home refreshed and encouraged by the hearty welcome they and their message had received. Much good has been done. Again and again the chapel has been the scene of spontaneous revivals, which but for the constant depletion of the population by emigration, and the entire disappearance of the cloth industry, would have made it the home of a considerable church. According to the latest returns there were thirty-six church members, forty-five Sunday scholars, and three lay



preachers connected with the chapel. Mr. Trenchard, who remained a staunch friend and generous supporter of the place, died July 18th, 1895, and is buried in the chapel.

In 1879 the building was reseated and restored at a cost of £70, raised by the congregation. In 1891 a stable was built close to the chapel gates, for the accommodation of the horses of the worshippers, who collect from a wide area. And in 1892-3 the congregation, by means of a bazaar and donations, raised £110, which they spent in replacing the old thatched roof with a slate one, and in other much needed repairs.

There is a small endowment consisting of the interest of £100 left by the late Mr. James Aplin, of Holditch Farm, who died in 1873, and is buried in the chapel yard.

The present minister is the Rev. George Robertson, who is doing an admirable and much valued work here and at Broadwindsor. The quality of his work has been recognised by his appointment as chairman of the Dorset Association for this year (1898), which office he is filling with much credit to himself and benefit to the churches.

O.

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## WAREHAM.

This is one of the most ancient towns in the kingdom ; some authorities believe it to have been occupied by the Romans, perhaps by Vespasian ; the earthen ramparts, known as "The Walls," which surround it on three sides, are of singular interest and almost unique. The picturesque church of St. Martin's is supposed to contain some parts dating back to Saxon times. The town suffered severely from the Danish incursions, and was one of the places "harried" by William the Norman on his way to the siege of Exeter. During the great war with France and for some years after, companies of soldiers occupied the Barracks at Westport. Previous to the advent of the railway there was a service of market boats to Poole, and as this was a cheap and easy way of conveying agricultural produce, the weekly market

was important and flourishing. Of late years there has been a serious decline, and many industries that once existed (boot and shoe making for export, paper mills, tanneries, &c.) have disappeared. There are extensive clay and cement works on the south side, and on the north a large pottery, used mainly for the manufacture of glazed pipes. The town is open and healthy, surrounded by extensive heaths, and though the scenery may seem somewhat bare and cheerless, it has a charm of its own, and artists of late have transferred to canvas many of its beauties of river, wood, moorland, and hill.

The Dissenting church in this town came into existence, as was the case with so many others, through the Act of Uniformity. Hutchins, the historian of Dorset, who was rector of Wareham, gives the following account: "Previous to the ejection in 1662, Mr. Chaplyn, a pious and conscientious clergyman, preached the gospel in the Established church in this town; but, when the Act of Uniformity took place, he resigned his ministerial charge, being convinced that this Act was erroneous in its principle, and pernicious in its tendency. Mr. Chaplyn was succeeded by a gentleman whose character was very different from that of his immediate predecessor; in consequence of which, many who before constantly attended at the Established Church now absented themselves, and sought instruction from those who were better qualified to communicate it."

Thomas Chaplyn, M.A., of Trinity College, Cambridge, was appointed to Wareham in 1643, and, with his assistants, supplied the various churches in the town. He is termed by Hutchins, "Intruder," which means that he was put in the place of another (Mr. Wake), who had made himself obnoxious to the ruling powers. When he was silenced he had eight children; but the providence of God wonderfully supported him. He retired to Cambridge, dying August 31st, 1667, aged 46, and was buried in St. Bennett's Church, where a monument was erected to his memory. Mrs. Chaplyn returned to Wareham, and, aided by her relatives, carried on the business of malting for the support of herself and family. Fortunately, just before his decease, Mr. Chaplyn invested £100 in the newly formed East India Co.,

which brought in from £40 to £70 yearly for the widow and children. Mrs. Chaplyn seems to have identified herself with the Nonconformists, for among the licenses issued in 1672 we find this: "House of Dorothy Chaplyn in Trinity Parish, in Wareham, Dorsett, Presn. Meeting Place, May 16." A sad story illustrating the bigotry and bitterness of the times is told concerning her burial. As the wife of a former rector the body was interred in St. Mary's Church, but an order came from the Bishop's Court for its removal; it was then buried under a path in the churchyard; again came an order that it should be dug up; but, on the mayor and others representing that it lay between two parishes, so belonging to neither, they allowed the poor lady's remains to rest in peace. She had been excommunicated, doubtless for her Nonconformity, but her children had paid £3 to have the excommunication removed.\*

William Clark was the first minister. The son of a clothier at Dorchester, and educated under the Rev. W. Benn, ejected minister of that town, he was chosen pastor in 1670, and continued such till his decease, September 23rd, 1722, aged 73. On the front of the meeting house is the inscription, "Founded 1670"; the first building on the spot was erected in 1694, it cannot therefore refer to this; it doubtless gives the date of the commencement of Mr. Clark's ministry. He preached to "this dispersed and persecuted people, assembling together in such places and at such times as were best adapted to secure them from the interruption and persecution of their enemies.†" "He was obliged to be long concealed, and sometimes narrowly escaped being taken, as he was preaching in the fields and private houses, and sometimes in a barn. . . . His grand-daughter (about 1772-5, and a member of the congregation) says he came about 1670, and was then about 21 years, and adds that after the Duke of Monmouth's defeat he was taken up for him on account of personal likeness to him.‡" On another occasion he was at Mr. Bythewood's house in Stoborough, when the officers came in search of him. He was

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\* See Calamy's Memorial, vol. ii., p. 160. † Hutchins.

‡ Josiah Thompson, Hist. Prot. Diss. Congregations, Hunter MSS.

put into a bedroom, and the lady of the house, being indisposed, retired to that room, and this was the only part they did not search, so he escaped. "He was also much persecuted by a family in the town. But after liberty was granted the head of it felt remorse of conscience, and left orders to be buried as near as possible to Mr. Clark.\*"

Mr. Clark married the daughter of William Eastman, an ejected minister, who was pastor for many years of the Dissenting church at Shaftesbury, where he died; he had eight children who survived; a Mr. John Gray, mentioned as one of the congregation in 1749, is said to have been his grandson.

Mr. Clark seems to have been very zealous for the spread of the gospel; on June 10th, 1672, he was licensed to be a Congregational teacher in the house of Rebecca Hastings, at Winfrith; he was really the founder of the Dissenting church at Swanage; for many years he gave a fortnightly lecture at Bere Regis; and no doubt he was the preacher in the following houses for which licenses were granted: That of Edward Hancock, Stoborough (1705); Edward Hayter, gentleman, East-Creech (1716); John Bythewood, Stoborough (1720-21). An old lady near 90, who, though the meeting-house of Mr. Powel, at Blandford, was within a short distance of her home, had ridden every Sunday for the previous ten years to Wareham (12 miles) to hear Mr. Clark. "Upon being asked by a gentleman what was her fancy for putting herself to so much inconvenience, she replied very heartily that she preferred riding through dirty roads a long and tedious way in quest of Mr. Clark's gospel to going over the threshold of her door to hear Mr. Powel's law.†"

There is in the possession of the church a silver tankard, formerly in the hands of Mr. John Brown, East Street, and known as "Parson Clark's cup," which, it is believed, was used at the sacramental service, held perhaps in secret places in these troublous times. Among the church records are four manuscript sermons, taken down in shorthand as they were delivered by Mr. Clark, and transcribed 45 years afterwards by Philip Cribb

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\* Walter Wilson MSS., Dr. Williams' Library.

† Monthly Repository for 1811, vol. vi., p. 203.



for Elizabeth Grove. "Mr. Clark had frequently expressed a desire that he might die suddenly on a Lord's Day, and as soon as he was incapable of preaching; his desires were gratified, for he died on a Lord's Day, immediately after he had delivered a discourse from Romans vii., 38. 'And we know that all things work together for good, &c.' He was an able, zealous, and successful preacher of the gospel. \* "

We have a striking tribute to the moral worth of these early Nonconformists from the Rev. Samuel Bolde, for 56 years rector of Steeple, a few miles to the south of the town. In the preface to a sermon preached March 26th 1682, these words occur: "And thus I must say, that those of the Dissenters I have been acquainted with have been men of great learning, exemplary piety, strict devotion, and extraordinary loyalty; men who have been diligent attenders on God in his public ordinances, eminently religious in their families, who have had a great regard to conscience in all the parts of their conversation with men. . . . Indeed they have been persons that could not be justly blamed for anything, but that they had straiter notions concerning human impositions in the service of God than we Conformists have."

As to the first place of worship we are left in uncertainty. "Upon the Indulgence in 1672, they probably erected their first meeting house; it is said to have been built in the shape of the letter T."† Its situation we have been unable to ascertain. In June 1694, as we learn from the original deed, Walter Parmiter, yeoman, sold a plot of garden land, about 52ft. square, for the sum of 40/- to William Clark, minister, John Bythewood, of Stoborough, tanner, and George Hayter, of East Creech, yeoman, and on this site a chapel was forthwith erected. In 1721 Mr. Clark transferred his interest in the property to John Brown, tanner, his son-in-law. John Bythewood transferred his interest in the same to his son John Bythewood, (George Hayter having, previously died); and in the year 1744, Giles Brown, the brother and representative of John Brown, and the three daughters of John Bythewood, junior, conveyed the site and building to Jonathan Grey and eleven other members of the congregation as

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\* Hutchins.

† Hunter MSS.



Trustees. It may be added that the eldest of the 3 daughters, Francis Bythewood, by will dated Sept. 1770, gave £50 to the church at Bridport, and £25 to the church at Cerne Abbas.

The congregation was evidently large and influential, "most of the inhabitants were Dissenters in Queen Anne's day."\* Hutchins remarks on Stoborough :—"It had a Mayor formerly, but the office sank when the Schism Act took place in 1714, the inhabitants being chiefly Dissenters, declined to qualify themselves." These numerous Dissenters must have been adherants of the Old Meeting, for no other Nonconformist place then existed ; it was "*the Meeting House*" for miles around of those who could not receive the doctrines, or profit by the ministrations, of the Established Church.

William Sedgley succeeded Mr. Clark ; educated at Tewkesbury and Gloucester, he came from Micheldean in 1724 ; he seems to have been very popular as a preacher, and the congregation increased, but about 1731 he removed to Bideford, and from thence to Newbury, where he died.

Robert Crouch from Fordingbridge followed soon after, and died Oct. 30, 1837, aged 32, and was buried near Mr. Clark in the Wareham churchyard. He married a lady of Shaftesbury, who continued to reside in this town, and died in her 90th year, early in the present century.†

Among the trustees in 1732 occurs the name of Thomas Delacourt, concerning whom certain alleged facts have come down to us, which deserve mention. Thomas, being accustomed to hold family worship, was one day summoned before the magistrates on the charge of keeping a conventicle in his house, and, though it was apparent that none but his own family were present, he was

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\* Hunter MSS.

†In the year 1732 the following were trustees of the small endowment, and, no doubt, worshippers in the meeting house :—Giles Brown, tanner ; Thomas Phippard, Holton, yeoman ; Jos. Brixey, clothier ; Edmund Hayter, East Creech, gent., (Hutchins in the last edition gives the pedigree of the family) ; John Brown, Worgrett, gent. ; Angel James, Ower Moigne, yeoman, (the eminent John Angel James of Birmingham, belonged to this family) ; Stephen White, Heavilton, yeoman ; Geo. Compton, clothier ; Thomas Brown ; Wm. Cribb, baker ; Henry Burleigh, cordwainer ; Jonadab Cheesman, ironmonger ; John Brewer, Lychett Minster ; John Fisher, Earn ; John Bartram, stocking maker ; Phillip Cribb, hatter ; Thomas Delacourt ; Edward Bennett ; Giles Turner.

heavily fined, and his household goods were offered for sale on three successive days at the Cross, but, as no purchaser could be found, they were restored to him. Thomas, though taking no part in the Monmouth rebellion, evidently gave it his sympathy. There is a part of the West Wall named "Bloody Bank," from the fact that several of Monmouth's followers were executed there. The bodies of three, (Captain Tyler, Mr. Matthews, and Mr. Holway), so runs the chronicle, were placed on the south bridge, and their heads nailed to a wooden tower that stood on the site of the present town hall. In the dead of night, Delacourt with two associates, removed the heads of the patriots and secreted them under his bed, and the following night buried them under the walls at the extremity of Wyatt's Lane, which runs along at the south of the chapel premises. It is related that one day Thomas saw a stranger with a military air ride into the inn, (Red Lion); believing him to be the bearer of important tidings, he went over and spoke to him. At first the stranger was suspicious, but on being told the name said, "You are the man I want; King William has landed at Torbay, and now let every true Briton join to secure our liberties and laws." Delacourt and two others immediately armed themselves and rode westward to meet the deliverer. He accompanied the army in its triumphal march to London, was appointed sentinel over the part of the Tower in which the infamous Judge Jeffries was confined, and on one occasion at least reproached him in language more forcible than refined. "You —— villian! you have been the murderer of many a pious man in the West of England, and I can testify to three as excellent as ever God Almighty made, etc." After the king was firmly seated on the throne this brave man returned to Wareham, lived as a Christian should, enjoyed the esteem of his fellow townsmen, and died in 1733, at the ripe age of 84, exclaiming with his parting breath "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly." The name frequently occurs among the church records, and as late as 1834, a Nathaniel Delacourt was senior deacon. Some members of the congregation to day, are proud, as they may well be, to trace their descent (in the female line) from him.

Simon Reader, born at Bedworth, in Warwickshire, joined the

church at the early age of 14; he was educated under Dr. Doddridge, and after a brief pastorate of two years at Uppingham, became minister at Wareham in 1739, and continued such for fifty years. He married Esther Brown, member of a leading family in the congregation, and had two daughters who survived. Ann, the elder, married Mr. Bird, of Poole, and Sarah married Mr. Clarke, brewer, of Newport, in the Isle of Wight. In 1747 the meeting house was re-built on nearly the same site. A singular arrangement was adopted in reference to the sittings; these were sold for a life, the highest price for each sitting was 5/-, and the lowest 2/3. At the decease of the person on whose life it was held, the seat reverted to the trustees, and was again sold. The occupant was required to pay 3d. (afterwards increased to 1/-) per year. The proceeds of the sale of sittings, and the small annual charge upon them, for a long period met all the incidental expenses. The same plan for a time prevailed in West Street Chapel, and also in the Independent Chapel at Poole.

The great fire of July 25th, 1762, destroyed the meeting-house. On a hot Sunday afternoon some turf ashes thrown out behind a house in the centre of the town, ignited loose straw, the fire extended to some adjacent thatch, and in a few minutes the flames had passed beyond control, spreading so rapidly that in three hours two-thirds of the houses were in ruins. Much public sympathy was evoked; the Young King George III. sent £500; contributions came in from various quarters, and the losses uncovered by insurance were to a large extent recouped. The meeting house was insured for £300, but the restoration cost £500, though without ornament and upon the old walls. The people had lost so heavily that they could not do much; the friends in other places, however, were so generous that, not only was the building paid for, but £100 remained over, which was divided among the sufferers.† In the preface to a volume of sermons on the "Ten Virgins, &c.," preached before the fire, and published afterwards, Mr. Reader makes a touching reference to

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\* See Hunter MSS.

the disaster, and to the public liberality which had so largely alleviated it.

Hutchins, for many years Mr. Reader's contemporary in the town, speaks in the highest terms of his character, ability, and attainments. "He acquired extensive information in almost every department of literature. The celebrated Martin, who published so many philosophical performances, was indebted to Mr. Reader for an important discovery in philosophy, with which he enriched one of his publications. As Mr. Reader was a man of extensive erudition, and exemplary piety, he procured what he justly merited, the respect of all who knew him; and this respectability he retained to the last." In a funeral sermon preached in the parish church he was described as "a scholar, a gentleman, and a christian." In addition to "thirteen sermons on the Parable of the Ten Virgins, with three others on Personal and Family Religion," printed in 1765, there was published in 1794, by Mr. Cracknell, a series of papers written by him, entitled "The Christian's Views and Reflections during his last illness, &c.,\*" to which are added two sermons preached on special occasions. About 1773, as we learn from the Hunter MSS., "between 400 and 500 hearers statedly attend at this place, though but a small proportion of communicants."

We have now to describe a serious division, which issued in the building of the West Street Chapel. The latter days of Mr. Reader were embittered by the prevalence among some of his leading people of Arian, or Unitarian, opinions. Mr. Kell, who kept an academy (John Angel James, of Birmingham, was one of his pupils) supplied the pulpit frequently during Mr. Reader's illness, and was proposed as his successor; being an avowed Arian, he was strongly objected to by a majority of the members

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\* In his latter days when laid aside, to some extent, from active work, Mr. Reader's thoughts were much directed to the future, and we have his meditations on "The Christian's reflections in the prospect of death—Last Converse with Friends—Farewell charge to his Family, and Prayer for them—Experiences when Dying—Meeting his departed Kindred in Heaven—Appearance before God—Attending his own Funeral—Acquaintance with the Martyrs and Saints of former Ages—Tour through the Works of God." These unusual reflections, though scope is given to the imagination, are striking and sensible, and just fitted to comfort and elevate the sorrowing and aged. A second edition was called for.



of the church, and others. As the meeting house had been founded by believers in the Divinity of our Lord, as this had been hitherto the teaching of its ministers, and was still the faith of the majority of the church, the aggrieved party sent in a firm protest, in which they say: "Make choice of such an one (as the former pastor) and you may still hope to see the congregation united and flourishing; but, if not, be it known to you, be it known to all the world, we will not give up the gospel of Christ without a struggle to preserve it. . . . We wish not for a separation, but cannot unite with you in the choice of Mr. Kell." But the protest was vain; the church as a body was not consulted, and the trustees, with some of the subscribers, appointed Mr. Kell. The dissentients forthwith fitted up a malthouse on the sawpits for worship. The opening sermon was preached by Mr. Ashburner, M.A., of Poole, from the words, "Fear not little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."\* So great was the crowd that many sat around on chairs outside, and the preacher stood on the ladder steps. The rabble sometimes molested them, and one dark night the steps were maliciously removed whilst the service was proceeding, fortunately this was discovered before any injury resulted. The new building was opened Jan. 1st 1790, by Mr. Lewis of Ringwood, and Mr. Ashburner. John Budden, the leader of the movement, was a man of high character and superior ability; born at Budden's Hyde, he was sent, a lad of 15, by his parents with a load of provisions for the relief of those burnt out by the fire, who had found temporary shelter in St. Martin's Church. He was clerk at the Old Meeting for which he received £1 1 0 a year. His great grandson Mr. John Budden Best has kindly handed over correspondence giving a full account of the disruption. The chief adviser of the Evangelical party at this crisis was the Rev. Thomas Reader, of Paul's Meeting, Taunton, the brother of the minister; his letters, chiefly to Mr. Budden, are full of holy confidence and courage, and of fatherly interest in the church at

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\*Mr. Ashburner had preached the funeral sermon for Mr. Reader, Jan. 1789, from ii. Tim. iv. vii., "I have fought a good fight, etc." One sentence in which tradition has preserved "you may as well attempt to extinguish the sun with a pair of bellows, as to try to destroy the glorious doctrine of the gospel."



Wareham. It was by his advice that the West Street chapel was erected; towards its cost he collected £154 in London; sent £50 from Taunton and the neighbourhood; provided, for a time, preachers from his own academy, and gave £2 2s. od. a year as long as he lived. Mr. George Kemp, of Poole, acted as treasurer to the building fund, and the friends of that town contributed £77 9s. 6d. John Calcraft, Esq., granted a lease of the land for 1,000 years, and gave a donation of £10; and heading the list of local contributors we find the names of Mrs. and Miss Reader for £5 each. The total cost is said to have amounted to about £460; the builders were George Gollop and John Swetland. The hand of the Lord was with these good people who held fast to what they deemed the truth; sympathy and support came from unexpected quarters; and for many years the congregation enjoyed large prosperity, and was a great spiritual power in the town and district.

John Lewis, son of the minister at Ringwood,† was here for about three years; he became pastor at Worcester and Wotton-under-Edge, where he died in 1849. In September, 1792, an invitation was given to Mr. Philipps Mills, of Dorchester, signed by 53 persons, and offering about £66 a year, but he declined. Benjamin Cracknell came in 1794, and removed 1801 to Weymouth. When the County Association was formed in West Street Chapel, September 9th, 1795, he was appointed secretary, and filled this office altogether for more than 20 years. He seems to have been an able, zealous, useful minister, and rendered valuable assistance to the churches in the county.

John Banister followed, and was ordained Oct. 12th, 1802. He took some steps towards the transfer of his residence, the church (at the east side of the chapel) for a minister's house, but dying

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\*The following are a few extracts, "I have so often, of late especially, prayed for you and the few at Wareham who fear God, that I thought it my duty to write to you. If you are faithful, I believe God will visit you and redeem you, though I know not how, when, or by whom." "Is there no way in a wilderness? God will make a way even there! Yea, go on, and you will find even rivers in the desert; God's pilgrims are better off than the world's settlers, and he that bears most for Christ gets most from him." "Stand fast on the Rock Christ, he can bear all your weight. None ever trusted in the God-man and were ashamed."

† See pages 260, 1.

somewhat suddenly (1811), whilst on a visit to London, his good intentions were unfulfilled.

William Gillson succeeded, and was ordained 1812; the public interest on the occasion was such, that the carriages lined the street from the chapel to the Red Lion, and the congregation had to adjourn to the old meeting. During Mr. Gillson's pastorate of three or four years, galleries were erected at a cost of £190. Two or three small legacies were applied to this object, and the Poole friends again evinced their practical sympathy by a gift of £50.

John Wills came to Wareham from Bakewell in 1817. Such was the respect for his character, and the attraction of his preaching, that an enlargement of the chapel was deemed necessary, and this was effected in 1825 at a cost of £600. J. Calcraft, Esq., gave £10; J. H. Calcroft, Esq., £10; Mr. Bartlett, £5. Mrs. Reader, who died June, 1797, aged 85, "much distinguished for her piety and benevolence" (Hutchins), had given to the chapel £100, which, from the increased value of the public funds, now realised £163; and this, with the minister's approval, was appropriated towards the cost of enlargement. As the ministrations at the parish church were lacking in earnestness and ability, many Episcopians availed themselves of the opportunity of hearing Mr. Wills. In his day a building was opened for divine service at Binegar, and a cottage was hired at Wool, the supplies being furnished from the West Street Church. The quaint, thoughtful, impressive preaching of Mr. Wills made him very popular in the county, as well as in the town, and his services were much sought after for special occasions. Under the impression that his work was done at Wareham, Mr. Wills, to the deep regret of the people, resigned in 1828, and accepted a call to Bridport. The last 27 years of his life were spent at Merriott, near Crewkerne, where he preached gratuitously in the village chapel, almost up to the time of his decease. Blessed with ample means, he abounded in good works; towards the new chapel at Merriott he contributed £500. He entered into rest October 28th, 1881, in his 92 year.

Mr. Forster followed Mr. Wills and supplied the chapel for about a year; whilst his ability was recognised, the soundness

of his faith was suspected ; he eventually joined the Unitarians. Richard Harris was pastor from 1829 to 1837, and removed to Westbury ; Frederick Rice (1837-42), who left for Teignmouth, and died at Lyme Regis 1847, aged 39 ; Richard Fletcher (1842-5), removed to Topsham, and died at Hornsea 1873 ; and Joseph Whiting (1846-50), who was afterwards at Bideford, and died at Croydon 1875 ; all devout, earnest, able men, who gave full proof of their ministry.

Several young men entered the ministry from West Street Church, viz. : William Hordle, for 50 years an honoured pastor at Harwich \* ; Samuel Hartnell, and John Hooper, tutors at Hoxton Academy ; George Bartlett, who was appointed for service as an Itinerant in the county, in June, 1801, and was afterwards minister at Waytown,† where he died ; Jacob Snelgar, who filled the pastorate for some years at High Wycombe ; George Scutt, who had been useful in the villages, and was a youth of great promise, but he died December, 1814, whilst a student at Hoxton Academy ; Stephen Hooper, who has recently retired from an honourable and useful pastorate of half a century at Heaton Mersey, near Manchester ; and Henry Hooper, a younger brother, still living, at Plymouth.

The Baptismal Register for 1800 carries us back to the time when this town was a military station, for in that year eight children were baptized in the chapel, whose parents belonged to the "Scots Greys," from Dundee, one of whom bore the opprobrious surname of Doeg (1 Sam. xxi.), another the honoured name of Livingstone. The three daughters of John Budden married officers of regiments at one time stationed in Wareham.

This sketch of West Street Chapel would not be complete without a reference to the law suit, in which the congregation became involved. Mrs. and Miss Tewkesbury, residing at East Lulworth, opened for preaching, their house, which was licensed April 17th, 1798, the services being conducted by Mr. Ashburner, who came from Poole once a month, by the minister of West Street, and by other friends. These estimable ladies, who were said to be "active supporters of a Gospel ministry" (Mrs. Tewkesbury

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\*See Memoir Evan. Mag., 1850.

†See page 360.

had given £5 5s. towards the erection of West Street Chapel), both died in 1803, and the Rev. B. Cracknell came up from Weymouth to preach a funeral sermon for them. They each bequeathed to the West Street Meeting £100, the interest on which was paid regularly for many years, and then withheld. In 1830, the people bestirred themselves to obtain the principal. Acting on the opinion of counsel, legal proceedings were taken, which ended disastrously; through trickery somewhere, the £200 was lost, and law expenses, to the extent of £730, were incurred. The people, dismayed at first, applied themselves to the removal of the burden, raising £114 within a week, and after years of anxiety, labour and self-sacrifice, the whole debt was extinguished in 1841, a grand meeting being held in the Barrack-field at Westport to celebrate the event. From various causes, however, the congregation had declined, while, on the other hand, the Old Meeting had shewn signs of increased spiritual vigour, and as the chief reason for a separation—difference of opinion on the cardinal doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord—had disappeared, it became evident that, in so small a town, it was better to have one strong congregation than two feeble ones. After much thought and discussion, a re-union took place in 1849, just sixty years after the disruption.\*

To return to the Old Meeting, Robert Kell, educated at Daventry, became Mr. Reader's successor in 1789.† He was a

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\* Among the chief supporters of the West Street Meeting mention may be made of John Budden, Thomas Freeborn, and John Dominey, deacons; John Stickland, a devout useful man who, not feeling at home with his Calvinistic brethren, eventually joined the Wesleyans (see memoir published by his grandson, Mr. John Bellows, of Gloucester); J. Panton and S. Townsend, brewers; Geo. Smith, Stoke Mills; J. Tuck; George Best, builder; Wm. Burge; Stephen Bird, the founder of Bird's Charity; Geo. Kemp, Stoke; Cornelius and Josiah Gould, Lytchett; J. Meaden; Justinian Oxford; J. Hooper; Wm. Hopkins; Mrs. Rawlins (sister of John Angel James) and her son, James Rawlins, late of Barford; Cornelius and Frederick Selby. Mr. F. Selby alone survives, and has for many years filled the office of Deacon at Carr's Lane, Birmingham.

† The Trustees or Managers in 1789 were: Robert Brown, gent.; Peter Selby, watchmaker; G. C. Butler, hosier, Corfe Castle; John Compton, clothier; Thomas Brown, timber merchant; Giles Brown, tanner; Wm. Cribb, surgeon; Thomas Delacourt, barber; Nat. Delacourt, carpenter; Geo. Filliter, gent.; Philip Parmiter, Stoborough; John Waygood, edge-tool maker; Thomas Phippard, brewer; Robert Tuck, saddler; Thomas Bolt, baker; Geo. Card Slade, brewer; Wm. Bradford, surgeon. In 1800, the names of Wm. Gillingham, merchant, and John Snelgar, paper manufacturer, were added.



scholarly cultured man, and, though an Arian, often attended, with his boarders, the West Street Sunday evening service. He married Mary Bythewood Delacourt, but this gave offence to some of his leading people, and he removed in 1800.

Thomas Thomas, educated at Daventry and previously minister at Broadway, Beaminster and Enfield, followed the same year. Though suspected of Arianism, he did not identify himself with the Arian party, but steered rather a middle course. He left in 1822, and retired to his native place, Broadway, Somerset, where he died August 17th, 1823.

Joseph P. Dobson, an attractive preacher of great ability, and holding Evangelical opinions, became minister in 1822. The late Thomas Binney, who had been a fellow student at Wymondley, came to visit him, and on one occasion preached a sermon from Rom. xii. 1—"Which is your *reasonable* service," producing a deep impression. The opposing parties made Mr. Dobson's position very difficult, and in 1826 he withdrew, to become the minister of New Broad Street Church, London, then a flourishing community. His last years were spent at Chelmsford, where he died, 1885.

The Arians withdrew in 1828, and built a chapel for themselves in South Street. There had been much agitation and contention for a long period; those who held the Divine Nature and Mission of Jesus Christ, headed by Mr. John Brown, of East Street, wine merchant, who was chosen a trustee in 1819, sought to regain control of the chapel premises and property, and were encouraged by the recovery just then of Lady Hewley's charity, in the North of England, for the orthodox party. The Browns, who led the opposite section, were naturally averse to losing the control of and leaving the place with which their ancestors for several generations had been associated, though it seems only reasonable and right that the Meeting house should belong to the party believing the same essential doctrines as were held by those who founded and endowed it. Doubtless there were faults on both sides, anyhow much bitterness was evoked. When the seceders withdrew they took with them the baptismal register, and communion plate, and tried hard, though in vain, to appropriate the endowment.



James Brown, trained at Wymondley, became pastor December, 1826, and soon found himself with a more united, though less numerous congregation. He was ordained October 14th, 1829, on the occasion of the Autumnal Meeting of the County Association, the late Mr. Hubbard, of Corfe Castle, being ordained at the same time. Mr. Brown took a deep interest in the formation of the Congregational Union; he and Mr. John Brown were appointed a deputation to represent the views of the County Association at the meeting held in London, May 13th, 1831. He died at Bethnal Green, 1881.

James Porter was invited in 1838, and left for Crediton in 1841. He afterwards became chief superintendent of education for the province of New-Brunswick, and died at Toronto 1873, much esteemed and trusted.

Thomas Seavill became pastor in 1841, and during the earlier years of his ministry large additions were made to the church. Removing in 1848, he subsequently settled at Swanage, and after retiring from active service he continued for some years to reside in that town, dying at Croydon, 1892.

When the union took place in 1849 the members in fellowship numbered 158, and the deacons chosen by the united church were: John Brown, Joseph Gillingham, Stephen Spicer (resigned 1877), Justinian Oxford, William Hopkins, and John Dominey; Mr. Gillingham declining to stand, Cornelius Gould was appointed in his place.

Uriah Brodribb Randall, M.A., became in 1851 the first pastor after the union, and was well fitted for the difficult position; by his prudence discord was averted, his character and ability won the respect of all classes, and during his ministry the congregation held a high position in the town and county. In his day the spacious schoolroom was erected, the work being carried out chiefly by Mr. John Gillingham; the freehold was purchased for £100, £20 was paid for the surrender of the lease, and the entire cost, amounting to about £625, was paid the following year (1861). Mr. Randall, for a short time previous to his departure in 1862, filled the office of secretary to the County

Association; he afterwards took the oversight of churches in Guernsey and Beaminster.

James Key came in 1863 from St. Petersburg, to which he returned in 1865, to become pastor of the British and American Congregational Church at Alexandroffsky, a busy suburb of the city. A meeting of remarkable interest was held April 30th, 1898, to celebrate the completion of his 40 years valued and useful ministry in the Russian Capital.\*

John David Davies, in the hope that a change of climate would restore his health, was sent out by the Colonial Missionary Society to take charge of a church at Kew, near Melbourne; he returned to England, and in 1866 was invited to Wareham, but he was a great sufferer, being often unable to take the services, and in 1871 he passed to his rest. "Of a gentle, tender, loving spirit, his memory is most fragrant, where he was best known."†

Edward J. Newton received a call in 1871, but his ministrations proving unacceptable to a large section of the congregation, unhappy dissensions followed, and much mischief was wrought. He removed in 1873, and died at Lee in 1892.

William Densham, educated at the Western College, who had occupied pastorates at Chard and South Petherton, settled in the summer of 1874, and is the present minister.

We find among the managers in 1800 the name of William Gillingham, merchant, which calls up one of the most distressing events in the annals of the church and town. Mr. Gillingham was the owner of market boats, which plied daily between Wareham and Poole, and were largely used for the conveyance of passengers and goods. The Quay, which now presents the aspect of desolation, being at that time perhaps the busiest scene in the county. On Thursday evening, October 2nd, 1806, a boat left Poole for Wareham, deeply laden, and having on board twelve passengers, with the owner and two boatmen. When about half way up the harbour the boat touched the ground, a stiff wind caused her to dip, shifting the cargo, and very soon she sank. A boatman and one woman reached the shore, but all

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\* "Christian World," May 18th, 1898.

† Memoir Congregational Year Book, 1872.

the others perished. Mr. Gillingham's great grandson is the treasurer of the church to day ; a passenger, Wm. Oxford, was the father of an esteemed deacon, Justinian Oxford ; and in the congregation are others whose ancestors found that evening a watery grave. Hutchins records a similar disaster to a market boat, in which, by a singular coincidence, the same number lost their lives. " March 10th, 1759, nineteen persons in a passage-boat from Poole to Wareham were forced by a violent storm on the beach, and thirteen perished in endeavouring to recover the shore."

In 1878, the Meeting-house was thoroughly renovated. The services of the late Mr. Stent, architect, of Warminster, were secured, and the contract was fulfilled by Mr. Ridout, of Wimborne, in a very satisfactory manner. When the plaster was removed, charred wood, molten lead, and blackened bricks gave evidence that the walls had been exposed to fierce heat ; in the great fire of 1762, whilst the masonry stood and was used again, the wood-work and roof were entirely destroyed. The re-opening Services were held September 19th, 1878, the Rev. J. C. Harrison, of Camden Town, preaching in the afternoon from the words, "Strength to strength," "Glory to glory"; and a large meeting was held in the evening, marked by much enthusiasm, with Martin Kemp-Welch, Esq., in the chair. The change wrought in the interior was marvellous ; what had been a dingy, barn-like place, quite devoid of ornament, was transformed into something specially bright, attractive, and comfortable. A bazaar brought in about £150 ; the people one and all worked and gave freely ; friends far and near rendered ready assistance, and thus the large outlay (about £730) was all met by the end of the year. The stained-glass window in the Apse was the gift of the architect, and the Communion table was presented by the contractor.

The organ, which had been in use for many years, was mainly the gift of John Brown, East Street, a remarkable man already referred to, but meriting a fuller notice. Mr. Brown, who came from the Isle of Wight early in the century, married Sophia Brown, the sister of Mrs. G. Filliter and Mrs. T. Phippard. He

was a man of great energy and ability, and an eloquent, fearless advocate of Reform, Free Trade, Education, and other public questions of the day. He was appointed, in 1840, Cash Secretary of the County Association, and in 1849 was publicly thanked for his twenty years' faithful service as Secretary of the Dorset Sunday School Union ; he also took an active part in the formation of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. For a generation, perhaps, no name among Nonconformists in the South-West of England was more widely known and honoured than that of "John Brown, of Wareham." At home, he took the lead in the Sunday school, conducted the singing, and was active in every branch of church work. He died September, 1849. The organ presented by him having become defective, a new instrument was built by Messrs. Maley, Young, and Oldknow, and opened in 1884. The cost, including necessary alterations in the gallery, amounting to £250, was paid for at the time, Montague Guest, Esq., M.P., sending a donation of £10.

Mr. Cornelius Selby, who initiated the movement for the erection of class rooms, should have a brief mention. He had filled the dual offices of Deacon and Superintendent of the Sunday school for upwards of forty years, and had sought to promote the best interests of the church in every way ; he had also acted as Treasurer of the County Association for seven years, until laid aside by infirmity. Mr. Selby, seeing that class-rooms were indispensable for the efficient conduct of the school, shortly before his decease, expressed to his daughters a wish that £50 should be applied from his estate as the nucleus of a fund for this object. After Mr. Selby's death (January 9th, 1894), the project was carried out, the memorial stone being laid by Freeland Filliter, Esq., August 22nd, 1895, and the opening services held December 9th following, when the Rev. F. W. Clark, B.A., of Frome, preached in the afternoon, and at the public meeting in the evening L. W. Pike, Esq., presided. The undertaking was greatly assisted by the advice and generosity of C. L. Newell, Esq., Chairman of the Building Committee. The cost of the new rooms, about £600, was all met the



following year. Mr. Alderman Hollingham, a life-long friend and supporter, gave, in addition to a donation, the handsome iron railings and gates in front of the church. Mr. Edgar Smith, the Superintendent of the Sunday School, and Mr. W. P. Collihole, rendered on this, as on other occasions, good service respectively as Secretary and Treasurer.

A British School, established in 1830, was a great success ; in 1858, this was transferred to the disused West Street Chapel ; and in 1873, it passed under the direction of a School Board. It should not be forgotten that the Congregationalists freely surrendered the West Street Chapel and premises, a valuable property, for the public advantage.

The first mention of any endowment occurs in the year 1732, when it consisted of £310, but the donors are unknown ; this sum was invested in Government Stock when at a low figure, and now stands at £500. The late Mr. Joseph Gillingham, merchant, in 1861, bequeathed £100, which, less legacy duty, purchased £96 15s. 6d. in Consols. Edward Hancock, by will dated 1734, gave a cottage at Stoborough, for the benefit of the minister ; this, with two acres of land apportioned in lieu of common rights, is let on a lease, which expires in 1899, at a yearly rental of one guinea. The bequest of John Stamp, in 1721, of £25 per annum, out of his lands at Heffleton and elsewhere, to the Dissenting minister at Wareham for the time being, was held to be void by the Court of Chancery, and so was never received. (See Weymouth).

The beautiful spot behind the Meeting-house, purchased in 1767, for the term of 500 years, at an annual ground rent of 5s., was first used as a Cemetery, in 1824.

Wareham, in common with other country churches, suffers much from the loss of young people, who go elsewhere to obtain a living. It is a satisfaction, however, to know that many of them, at least, have conducted themselves in a way such as to secure the confidence of, and make them a blessing to, the communities among which they have dwelt. Scarcely a Colony but contains representatives of families formerly associated with the "Old Meeting." The late Samuel Smith, of Anguston, South Australia, well known as



a prosperous vine-grower and a helper in every good work, went out from the Sunday school, in which he was a teacher some fifty years ago, and one day told the pastor of the church of which he was deacon, that the "Old Meeting," Wareham, was to him the dearest spot on earth. A few years since, the Sunday school teachers sent congratulations to the following old scholars on being elected mayors of their respective towns: Mr. C. H. Smith, Chatham (his brother Edwin has filled the office of Alderman in the same town); Mr. W. Roles, of Romsey; and Mr. Alfred J. Hooper, of Bury St. Edmunds.

The present deacons are Jonathan Bennett, John Prince, and Philip P. Gillingham. Such is the chequered story of the Congregational Church in this ancient town. Many lessons will suggest themselves to the thoughtful reader. Happily free from the persecutions and strifes of former times, the Church has still a witness to bear, and a work to fulfil. The memory of the founders of the place, who were true to their convictions at whatever cost; and of the worthy men and women, who, during several generations have upheld it by their efforts and their prayers, should be a stimulus to fidelity and diligence.

D.

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## WAYTOWN and NETHERBURY.

In past times, when Dorset was a manufacturing county to an extent that it is not now, and has not been for many a long year there were in this sequestered and lovely neighbourhood a number of small woollen and linen-cloth factories, which kept their owners in comfortable circumstances, and gave employment to a hardy, industrious and independent population. The ancient parish of Netherbury covered a very large area, in which, in addition to the village of that name, there were several hamlets. One of the smallest and most remote of these hamlets is Waytown—indeed, a stranger would have difficulty in finding any cluster of houses worthy of being dignified with the name of a hamlet. It is, however, put first at the head of this story, because

for Congregational purposes the relation of the two places has been exactly reversed. For nearly two hundred years Waytown was the place where the services were held, and only more recently has a chapel been provided at Netherbury, as will appear by what follows.

That there were Nonconformists in the parish at a very early period is evident,\* for on Charles II.'s indulgence (1672) two houses were licensed for worship, viz., the houses of Henry Weay and Richard Forsey, though we cannot now say in what part of the parish they were situated.

Calamy says of the Rev. John Torner,† who had during the civil war been chaplain to the regiment of John Fitz-James, Esq. (afterwards Sir John), of Leweston, near Sherborne, in the Parliamentary army, and who, notwithstanding the strong persuasion of his old commander to conform, on the passing of the Act of Uniformity (1662), had been ejected from the rectory of North Cricket, near Ilminster, for Nonconformity, because he could not with a clear conscience abjure the Covenant; that “towards the end of King Charles’ reign he was again imprisoned, and after being released, preached in Bemister, Netherbury, &c., agreeable to his expectations; for he all along said that God would again open his mouth to preach in the churches.” Of how long he continued at Netherbury we have no record. But soon after we find the Rev. T. Crane, M.A., of Beaminster, and his assistant, the Rev. Thos. Hoare‡ (who joined him in 1687) conducting services at alternately at Waytown. This was probably at, or immediately after the passing of the Toleration Act (1689). After Mr. Crane’s death we find the Rev. Richard Orchard here in 1715. He was apparently a young man, for he was afterwards minister successively of Cerne and Weymouth, at which latter place he was living in 1743.§ He was succeeded by the Rev. Richard Hallett, probably a native of the neighbourhood, who afterwards removed to Crewkerne, where he was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Blake in 1754. In Mr. Hallett’s time the congregation, gathered no doubt from a wide area, numbered two hundred.

\* See page 81, “Brice.”

† See page 9.

‡ Thompson MSS.

§ Fund Board records.

The next minister was the Rev. Thomas Coad, a native of Stoford,\* who was at Bere Regis in 1738. His successor was the Rev. John Whitty, afterwards of Lyme. Mr. Whitty was the son of Thomas Whitty, of Westwater, Axminster, and was born there in 1692, and married Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of William Kenway, of Wycroft,† Axminster. He seems to have been living at Lyme Regis in 1723, for in a legal document of that date he is described as "of Lyme, clerk." The probability is that he was living there without charge, and somewhat later came to Waytown, which he left to return as minister of the church at Lyme in 1735.‡

Next came the Rev. Joseph Keech, who appears to have settled in 1737, and was ordained with three other young ministers at Bridport, 1738.§ He was an Arian, and many years afterwards was minister of the Unitarian congregation at Ilminster, where he was in 1770. With him was apparently associated another of the young ministers ordained at the same time, the Rev. Joseph Paull, of Blackdown.¶ As usual where the pulpit was filled with Arian preachers, the congregations began to decline. The minister who followed was the Rev. John Prettyjohn, a man of remarkable ability in some ways, but a decided Arian. One of his successors, who was also his neighbour and friend, described him as "a very able mathematician and a good linguist, but not a popular preacher." It is always easy to put down the decline of a congregation to the unpopularity of the minister, but possibly if Mr. Prettyjohn had had a fuller gospel to preach, the congregation would not only have held together, but increased. In every part of the country at this time, as Murch confesses, Arian preachers were emptying the churches. At Bridport a great controversy had resulted in the withdrawal of a very considerable section of the congregation, and the establishment of a new church on a decidedly evangelical basis. This controversy could hardly be unknown, or fail to have its influence on the minds of

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\* See pages 149-150. † Marriage Settlement, dated 26th June, 1714.

‡ Mr. Whitby had five children, John, a physician, at Wycroft; Samuel, a surgeon, at Lyme; all died without children.

§ See page 98. || See page 332.

the people at Waytown. Indeed it seems as if there had been a secession here in 1750, for in January, 1751, the house of William Pitcher, at South Bowood, about a mile from the Waytown Chapel, was licensed as a Presbyterian place of worship. Mr. Prettyjohn struggled on for a time, but in 1758 he left, and the place was shut up. Mr. Prettyjohn, who seems to have been a man of property, retired to Bridport, never taking another charge, and was living there in 1773.

The meeting-house remained closed until the Rev. Richard Davies, who had finished his education at Carmarthen College in 1754, and had meanwhile been minister of Newport, Mon., Volster, Coleford, Tisbury and Marshfield,\* became the minister in 1765. He did not, however, remain long, but removed to Oakingham, Berks, in 1767, as successor to the Rev. John Williams. Like his predecessors, he was not an Evangelical. In his time the hearers did not number one hundred.† The Rev. Matthew Anstis followed in 1767. He was born at St. Germain's, in 1740, and educated at Carmarthen; on leaving College he preached for a time at Falmouth, and succeeded the famous Dr. Toulmin at Colyton, in 1766. Murch says‡ that he "removed in 1768 to Bridport, being desired by the Corporation of that town to undertake a school there," and adds that "in addition to his invitation to become master of the school, he received and accepted another from a small congregation in the neighbourhood. The latter office he resigned in a few years and confined himself to education." He was here in 1773, for in that year he signed a petition to Parliament, and described himself as minister of Waytown. He remained until 1779. As stated above, after resigning his charge at Waytown, he continued to reside at Bridport, where he died August 28th, 1823. Until some years of his death he conducted a large boarding and day school, to which the principal families in the town sent their children. One of his pupils was the late Sir Charles Whetham, Lord Mayor of London. Mr. Anstis was a quick-tempered, but kindly, charitable and generous man.

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\* Carmarthen Coll. Records.

† Add. MSS. Brit. Mus. 24,484.

‡ Western Churches, p. 339.



He was a pronounced Unitarian, from an early part of his life.

This brings down the history of the chapel to somewhere about 1779. It is to this period that the following extract refers. "This place of worship was formerly supplied by a Socinian minister" (though originally founded by those who were orthodox) "but, the congregation having dwindled to nothing, it was shut up for some years."\* Apparently, as in 1751, there was a revolt on the part of the hearers against the kind of preaching heard in the meeting-house, for on April 12th, 1774, the house of Stephen Hallett, at Melplash, just across the valley from Waytown, was licensed for worship and, as far as we can make out, was supplied with preachers from the Rev. J. Rooker's Academy at Bridport. This secession appears to have been the last straw and led to the shutting up of the old meeting-house. "The surviving trustee then made it over to a gentleman in Mr. Saltern's congregation" (Mr. Saltern succeeded Mr. Rooker in May, 1786), "who, mainly at his own expense, put it into a state of repair."\* The grant here referred to was dated Sep. 20th, 1786, and was made to Stephen Hallett, of Melplash, gentleman, and George Golding, of Netherbury, gentleman. It may be interesting, as showing the connection with the Bridport church, that these gentlemen were appointed deacons of that church, Jannary 30th, 1789. With these facts in mind it can hardly be doubted that the opening of Mr. Hallett's house for worship was a revolt against the doctrine at that time preached in the Waytown Chapel, or that that action had the result of changing the character of the place from nominally Presbyterian to Congregational.\* "The chapel was re-opened in 1787, and was supplied occasionally by Mr. Saltern and other friends. For ten years Mr. Pike (or Pyke) was minister, dividing his services between Waytown and Wood Mill Chapel."† Of his work we know nothing. All record of him seems to have disappeared, except a solitary reference to him in the Beaminster Church Book in 1797 as "Mr. Pyke, a worthy minister of Netherbury," and the fact mentioned in the biography of Mr. Standerwick, of Broadwindsor, that in 1837 he "accepted the call of the church

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\* Evangelical Mag. 1807.

† See p. 231.



at Broadwey, to become colleague of their aged pastor, Rev. J. Pyke, and succeeded him in 1843.”\*

In 1803, the Rev. George Bartlett, a native of Wareham, was chosen minister, and, after five years work, ordained June 11th, 1807. “God evidently blessed his labours.” And here “in the midst of his usefulness, at the early age of thirty, he fell a victim to the disease of water on the brain, after an illness of little more than a week,” Nov. 17th, 1808.† The work seems to have taken a new start, for in 1812 the house occupied by John Clarke, at Netherbury, was licensed as an Independent place of worship and the following year “a new-built meeting-house, the property of Mrs. Elizabeth Hopkins,” was licensed at Loders.

Mr. Bartlett was followed by the Rev. James Cope, educated at Hoxton Academy, who, after having been at work some time, was ordained here June 28th, 1815,‡ when Revs. J. and W. Rooker, Jas. Small, Tutor of the Axminster Academy, took part, and the Rev. — Cope, of Launceston (? his father) gave the charge. He resided, as many of his predecessors had done, at Bridport, where, the income at Waytown being small, “he chiefly supported himself by keeping a respectable boarding-school and, happily, he had private resources also.”§ He must have been a busy man, for in addition to the services at Waytown and the demands of his school, in which he was no doubt assisted by Mrs. Prior (a sister of Colonel Gummer) he preached at Wood Mill and Loders, and elsewhere, and was the County Corresponding Secretary of the Home Missionary Society. He removed, in 1823, to Weymouth, where his anxiety to be about his Master’s business led him to go about among the neighbouring villages preaching. Among the ministers to whom the Home Missionary Society made grants in that year “to enable them to engage more extensively in village work” we find Mr. Cope’s name. In the following year he removed to Salisbury, and in 1828 to Lymington. From 1831 to 1838 he was at West Cowes. In the latter year he settled at St. Austell, where he died in 1863.

The next minister was the Rev. J. C. Browne,|| sent hither by

\* Cong. Year Book, 1877, p. 417. † Evang. Mag., 1808. ‡ Ibid, 1815.

§ Biog. Cong. Year Book, 1864. || See p. 292.

the Home Missionary Society. He does not seem to have been very successful. After he had been here some time we read "your committee can report but little that is encouraging. Owing to various local causes the attendance rather decreases."\* It may be that he tried to cover too large a district and possibly his peculiarities interfered with his success. In 1830 the chapel at Nettlecombe (we have no record of when it was built or what has become of it) was "given up as not answering the expectation of the Committee,"† and it looks as if the Missionary was withdrawn from the neighbourhood, though no doubt the services continued.

Through the interest and exertions of the Rev. John Wills, then lately settled at Bridport, who undertook to raise £50 a year towards the support of a Missionary labouring among the villages and hamlets of the locality, the Rev. F. Smith "lately commended to the grace of God in the Rev. Mr. Robinson's Chapel, Soho Square," began his ministry in 1832, and "with encouraging appearances of success."‡ Mr. Smith's sphere of labour took in eight stations, including Waytown and Broadwindsor.

When Mr. Smith left in 1835 the Home Missionary Society sent the Rev. James Prior. For a time he lived at Milton, but ultimately removed to Netherbury. After two years work he writes "our little church at Waytown increases, two have been added during the last six weeks. The congregations have been good considering the . . . distance the greater part have to come. Three years later, in 1840, he writes,§

"On Sabbath-day, the 16th, we had the happiness of opening a room for worship in a small hamlet called Melplash, when about 150 persons attended to hear the Word of Life; and hope they did not attend in vain.

"Our Bridport friends intend . . . supplying this interesting little cause, with my help, on Sabbath evenings.

"At Waytown, I am happy to say, that our morning congregations are still on the increase, although we are not without those around us who would, from their hearts, wish it otherwise, but "greater is He that is for us than all that are against us.

"Upon the whole we are going forward, and though not so fast as we could wish, yet we are increasing.

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\* Home Miss. Report, 1828. † Ibid, 1830. ‡ Ibid, 1833.

§ Home Miss. Mag., Oct., 1840.

“ Our Christian friends, both of Bridport and Beaminster, unite in the great work, so that we have five Sabbath Schools open every Lord's Day, and five services conducted every Sabbath evening ; (number of hearers in all the places combined, 640), my time is therefore so completely filled up, that I cannot extend my labour without injury to those places already in operation.

“ Since I have been here six places have been opened by myself and friends, and eight by other denominations in the immediate vicinity of this station.”

Mr. Prior was a diligent, hardworking, methodical man, and the first minister of Waytown who kept any records that have come down to us. These records are written in a clear, strong hand, and create the impression that he was a true man and a good minister. He had plenty of work on his hands, but was blessed in it and by it. After about ten years' work in this neighbourhood he emigrated with his family to the United States.

In 1846, the Rev. Daniel Horscraft, a student of Cotton End Academy, was sent to take charge of the work. He was, like several of his successors, greatly assisted and encouraged by the ever-ready help and counsel of the Rev. John Wills, who, on his retirement from the pastorate at Bridport, had come to live at Camesworth (in what is now the parsonage of Melplash Church), and had rendered good service during the interval between Mr. Prior's departure and Mr. Horscraft's settlement. Mr. Horscraft was ordained Oct. 20th, 1847, and proved himself a good minister and was greatly esteemed. He left in 1850, having accepted an invitation to become pastor of the church at Higham, Norfolk. He was afterwards successively minister of Burton-on-Trent, Bourne, and New Hampton. He died suddenly on Finchley Road Railway Station, Nov. 23rd, 1873.

The next minister was the Rev. Archibald Morrison, who came in the autumn of 1850. One of the many stories told about Mr. Wills concerns Mr. Morrison. He had been invited to dine one day with Mr. Wills, when, thinking probably to spend a little time pleasantly and profitably in the society of the older minister, or to relieve the loneliness of the old bachelor's home, he arrived in the early part of the forenoon. On being shown in he was thus greeted by his plain-spoken, but kindly-hearted senior, “ What are you doing here at this time of day ? Go home, sir,

and study your sermon, and come at dinner time." Some difference with one of the most active members of the congregation—Mr. Conway\*—led to his removal into Hertfordshire in 1852. In March, 1853, the Rev. James Cheney, of Broadwindsor, relying on the assistance of Mr. Wills, added the oversight of Waytown to his charge.

On his removal to Portland in 1854, the Rev. S. Bater, of Cotton End Academy, was appointed by the Home Missionary Society to the united stations of Broadwindsor and Waytown. His ministry was marked by a forward movement. For some years the Wesleyans had held services in a cottage in Netherbury village, but without much success. Discouraged, they had given up the services, and the place stood empty. This cottage Mr. Bater and his friends bought and converted it into a chapel, at a cost of £120. Finding the work at Waytown and Netherbury too great a tax on his strength, when added to the immense work he was doing elsewhere, he arranged with the Home Missionary Society to relieve him of it in 1857. Accordingly, the Rev. James Pearce Mansfield, one of the many proteges of the late Mr. Jupe, of Mere, was sent by the Society in the same year. His salary, like that of all the ministers of Waytown, was small, but, small as it was, there seems to have been some difficulty in raising it in consequence of the constantly recurring removals of the people, who were obliged to go elsewhere in search of employment. There is a letter from the late Mr. Robert Trevett, of Melplash, an old member and fast friend of the cause, to the treasurer, in which he says, "Let me know how you stand. I shall not be backward in aiding you." After labouring happily and with much success for three years, Mr. Mansfield accepted an invitation to the historic chapel at Horningsham. Removing thence to Trowbridge, where he was for a short time minister of Silver Street Church, he died January 12th, 1888, aged 56. He was followed by the Rev. Charles White, late of the Liverpool Town Mission, appointed by the Home Hissionary Society to labour in the district of Waytown and Netherbury, where he commenced his work by preaching at

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\* Home Missionary Society Minutes.



Waytown, May 5th, 1861. His stay was very short, and appears to have ended with the year.

In May, 1862, Mr. William Mends Howell, of the Normal College, Swansea, was invited by the Rev. J. Rogers, District Secretary of the Home Missionary Society, to undertake the work as lay evangelist, which he accepted, and immediately entered on his duties. "He was a man of very devout habits and a very earnest and faithful preacher. He was quite at home with the sick and afflicted." \* During his time the congregations were large, so that it was sometimes difficult for late comers to find a seat. He left the next year to enter the British Institute, going thence to Frampton Cotterell, where he had the happiness of building a fine new chapel, and where he died, May 9th, 1873. He married a Miss Brown, of Netherbury. Mr. Howell was succeeded by Mr. Joseph Nutter, who was here only a short time. Mr. Blatch came next, and he also remained but a very short time. The next evangelist was Mr. William Barwell, educated at the Bristol Institute, who remained three years, removing to Bere Regis in 1871,† and died at Cheltenham in 1890. On Mr. Barwell's removal, the two chapels were put under the care of the minister of Beaminster, and the services of Mr. William Swatridge, of Beaminster, were obtained to assist the minister in conducting the services. From that time to the present he has continued the work. In 1883, at the instance and through the efforts of the Rev. U. B. Randall, M.A., the chapel at Netherbury was renovated. A hideous gallery, which half filled the place, was removed, the walls re-coloured, and the pulpit and pews re-modelled, at a cost of £50. In 1885 the Waytown chapel was altered, the cost of which was almost wholly defrayed by a legacy of £50 left by Miss Whitty, daughter or a former deacon of Beaminster. "Miss Whitty had wished that the ancient thatch, said to be four feet thick and the home of rats innumerable, should be replaced by slates, but," says Mr. Randall, "as she left that at my discretion, I decided otherwise. We thought the thatch far most in keeping with the old walls. So we left the rats to continue, sometimes to startle the congregation

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\* Biog. Cong. Year Book, 1874.

† See p. 25.

and amuse the young people by occasionally showing their tails through some of the holes in the roof."

We have been unable to ascertain at what date the Waytown chapel came into the hands of the congregation, but it must have been at a comparatively early date. It is itself one of the sad reminders of a trade and prosperity that has passed away, having been originally, it is commonly believed, a blue-cloth factory. Both chapels are now almost empty. This is ascribed in great part to the removal of whole families, once strongly attached to the cause, from the neighbourhood, consequent on the extinction of the local industries, the long-continued depression in agriculture, upon which the people are now wholly dependent, and the opening of new places of worship in the surrounding villages and hamlets. " 'Tis true, 'tis pity. Pity 'tis, 'tis true." O.

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## WEYMOUTH.

### GLOUCESTER STREET CHURCH.

Weymouth, a well-known seaside resort, was brought into notice by the frequent visits of King George III, and its reputation has been fully maintained. It has a long and wide Esplanade fronting a beautiful Bay, somewhat resembling that of Naples. During the summer months an efficient service of excursion boats gives easy access to Bournemouth, Torquay, and other places of interest. Mail steamers ply daily to and from the Channel Islands, with which there is considerable traffic, the imports consisting largely of garden produce. The Whitehead Torpedo Works, to the westward, employ many hands, and important extensions of the Great Western Railway are projected. On the promontory called the "Nothe" stand military barracks, and at its extremity a strong fort guards the entrance to the harbour, and to the Portland Roads, whose safe and spacious anchorage is often occupied by the Channel Fleet.

An Independent congregation existed here in the time of the Commonwealth. John Wesley, grandfather of the founder of

Methodism, before his ejection from Winterborne Whitchurch in 1662, had a lengthened interview with the Bishop of Bristol, of which a full account is preserved in Calamy's "Memorial"\*. To the question "By whom were you sent?" Wesley replied "By a Church of Jesus Christ . . . the Church at Melcombe." "That factious and heretical Church" added the Bishop, "you mean a gathered Church; but we must have no gathered Churches in England; and you will see it so. For there must be unity without divisions among us; and there can be no unity without uniformity." Wesley went on to say that he was "approved of by judicious, able christians, ministers and others. . . . It pleased God to seal my labours with success . . . at Radpole, Melcombe, Turnwood, Whitchurch, and at sea. I shall add another ingredient of my mission, when the church saw the presence of God going along with me, they did by fasting and prayer, in a day set apart for that end, seek an abundant blessing on my endeavours." Said the Bishop "You will justify your preaching, without ordination according to the law?" Wesley replied "All these things laid together are satisfactory to me for my procedure therein." "You will stand to your principles you say.?" "I intend it through the grace of God, and to be faithful to the King's Majesty, however you deal with me."

Mr. Wesley preached his farewell sermon at Whitchurch, August 17th, 1662, from Acts xx., 32, to a "weeping auditory." "On February 22nd following, he removed with his family to Melcombe, but the Corporation made an order against his settlement there, imposing a fine of £20 on his landlady, and 5/- per week on him. He waited on the Mayor, and some other persons, pleading that he had lived in the town formerly, and had given notice of his design to come hither again. He offered also to give security, but it was of no avail."† These violent proceedings forced him to leave the town, and he visited various places in Somerset, especially Crewkerne, Ilminster, Taunton and Bridgwater, where he preached quietly as opportunity offered, helping many fellow-sufferers to be steadfast, and making numerous friends, some of whom were able to render him needed

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\* Vol. ii., p. 165.

† Calamy's Mem. Vol. ii., p. 173.

assistance in after years. At length a gentleman offered him a good house rent free, at Preston, a village about 3 miles from Weymouth, and there with his family he took up his abode "with great thankfulness and admiration." The Five Mile Act in 1665 made him again a wanderer. He seems to have repeated his visits to the towns in Somerset, and preached often secretly at Weymouth, and in the villages around. Four times he was cast into jail. A number of serious christians at Poole invited him to be their pastor, and he visited them as often as circumstances permitted, the relation being retained till his decease at Preston about 1670. The Vicar of the Parish refused to allow his body to be buried in the Church, and the place of his interment is unknown. He was a man of whom the world was not worthy; he served his Master "with his whole heart, according to the best light he had." Hutchin's says of him: "He suffered much persecution on account of his objection to the Act of Uniformity, but thro' it all his cheerful and patient consistency were admirable."

Nonconformity, however, in this town, owes its origin mainly to the ejection of George Thorne, the Rector of Melcombe Regis, which office he had filled nearly twenty years. His farewell sermon, of which Calamy gives a full outline, was preached from Psalm xxxvii., 34, "Wait on the Lord and keep his way." Towards the close he makes this personal reference, "You know what is required of me, if I will continue a minister in this kingdom. I hope no sober person can think me such a humorous perverse fanatic as to throw away my maintainance, much less my ministerial capacity (which is much dearer to me than livelihood, yea, than life), out of a proud humour and vain-glorious fancy. In brief, therefore, as I shall answer it before the Great God, the Searcher of all hearts, and the righteous Judge, did not conscience towards God forbid me, I would willingly do all the Act requires. But seeing I cannot declare an *unfeigned assent and consent*, I dare not (and from your love to me, I know you would not have me) dissemble with God and man. I do therefore humbly choose to submit to the penalty rather than by a hypocritical conformity (for such it must be in me, if any) to



dishonour my God, wound my own conscience, and dissemble with men ; knowing assuredly that my God hath no need of my sin." Such were the men—devout, conscientious, capable—who were driven out of the National Church at this period, by the devices of misguided and unscrupulous rulers in Church and State. It is a most painful and humbling episode in Ecclesiastical History. The course then pursued has been strongly condemned by Episcopalians themselves ; Archdeacon Hare describes it as that "schismatical Act of Uniformity," an Act meant as a scourge for Nonconformists, but which has become a yoke for the necks of Churchmen themselves—a yoke too heavy to be borne.

Many of Mr. Thorne's hearers, who had valued his Evangelical preaching, and who were unable to profit by that of his successor, a man of a very different stamp, resolved to follow their beloved pastor. For a while they met together for Divine worship on the Lord's Day, but such was the spirit of the times, and such the cruel laws against Nonconformist ministers exercising their gifts, that Mr. Thorne, though a loyal and peaceable subject, was much harrassed and obliged to quit the kingdom. He was an exile in 1663. But services continued to be held secretly in various places, and the persecuted flock were glad to avail themselves of the instructions of any ministers who had the courage to preach in defiance of the various hostile Acts. The town Archives supply the following facts :—

"Bee it remembered that on July 9, 1665, Mat. Pitt and ten others were at a Conventicle or Meeting, under colour of some exercise of religion in other manner than is allowed by the Liturgy or practice of the Church of England, in the dwelling house of H. Saunders." The offence was repeated in the same house, July 16th, 1665.

There is a further record of the presence of thirty-two persons at a Conventicle, June 3rd, 1666. They were variously fined from H. Dumberfield 15s., to Catherine Barber, 6d. ; Mat. Pitt, H.D., and two others, having been previously convicted, were imprisoned for three months and one day ; two others for six weeks and one day. The rest, on paying their fines, were discharged.

After the issue of the King's Indulgence permitting Nonconformist worship, Mr. Thorne seems to have returned, for

on May 1st, 1672, a licence was taken out by him to be a "Congregational Teacher" in the house of James Reed, in Weymouth. When persecution was renewed, Mr. Thorne was so maliciously prosecuted for his Nonconformity that he was obliged to sell his estate and fly from place to place to conceal himself.\*

In 1689, immediately after the passing of the Toleration Act, the Nonconformists of the district appear to have been gathered into a regular congregation. It seems at least probable that Mr. Thorne ministered among them, but if there were a settled pastor in the first few years we have no record of the fact. The Rev. John Fenner is said to have been chosen the minister in 1695, he certainly filled the office in the early part of that year, for there was made to him, at Weymouth, April 13th, 1695, from the Congregational Fund Board, a grant of £6, which was increased to £10 per annum in succeeding years.

By the courtesy of the officials of "Cozens & Company" (the present owners of the old chapel) the deeds have been inspected, from which we learn that on June 3rd, 1703, three messuages with out-buildings in St. Nicholas Street, late in the tenure or possession of George Churchey, deceased, were sold by William Salmon, of Wells, Somerset, mercer, to the Rev. John Fenner, clerk, for the sum of £40, but no mention is made of any special use to which they had been or might be applied. On February 18th, 1705, Mr. Fenner conveyed the property to the following as Trustees: Simon Orchard, merchant; Samuel Whetcombe, Esq.; David Arbuthnot, merchant; Francis Read, senr., grocer; Joseph Read, shipwright; Francis Read, junr., grocer; and Jonathan Edwards, merchant, "to suffer the said John Fenner, the present minister of the separate congregation of reformed Christians in Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, commonly called Dissenters, for so long a time as he shall continue, and have by law sufficient license and authority to exercise his ministerial functions there"; and after his decease or departure to suffer his successor of the same way or persuasion to fulfil his ministry therein. At the same time Mr. Fenner was

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\* Calamy's Memorial II., page 161.

repaid the £40 which he had spent on the purchase of the premises.

Hutchins (latest edition) makes this statement: "Worship had been conducted for twenty-six years in three cottages in St. Nicholas Street, . . . and during his (Mr. Fenner's) ministry the owner of the cottages, having left his possessions for the use of the congregation, a small chapel was erected on the site." This paragraph implies that worship had been held in the cottages or part of them, almost from the time of the Indulgence in 1672. We find that on June 10th, 1672, a license was granted for the house of Ester Churchey, widow, in Weymouth and Melcombe Regis as a Presbyterian Meeting place. The deed of 1703 speaks of the messuages as being "late in the tenure or possession of George Churchey, deceased." Now, as Churchey is a very uncommon surname, is it not reasonable to infer that the house of Ester Churchey was one of these three cottages, and that George Churchey was a descendant, perhaps a son? There seems thus some evidence to confirm the historian's statement that worship had been conducted in the three cottages for twenty-six years. On the other part of the paragraph, "the owner of the cottages having left his possessions for the use of the congregation," no light is thrown by the ancient documents. George Churchey is said to have held the "tenure or possession." Was he the owner of the cottages, and did he in some way make a present of them to the congregation? Was William Salmon the legal representative of George Churchey, and did he sell for £40 because that amount had been spent on alterations and repairs? It is useless to speculate; anyhow, £40 seems an inadequate sum to pay for the real value of three freehold cottages with out-buildings, in the busiest part, for St. Nicholas Street at that time led directly to the bridge over the Backwater connecting the two parts of the town.

Further as to the building of a new chapel in Mr. Fenner's day on the site of the cottages, it is probable that some of the old walls were made use of, for the deeds speak of *the premises or some part of them as converted into a meeting-house*.

Whilst speaking of the building, it may not be out of place to

give the names of the Trustees at successive periods, who were, doubtless, the leading adherents and supporters. In 1727 the premises were conveyed by the surviving Trustees, Samuel Whetcombe (of Lillington, Dorset) and Joseph Read, to themselves ; Thomas Rose, gentlemen ; Hannaniah Brett, tailor ; Benjamin Devenish, cooper ; William Churchill, roper ; and Theodore Aubie, barber. In 1729, about the time of the Secession, the property was conveyed to Baruch Nowell, minister at Dorchester, who, the same year conveyed it to Samuel Whetcombe ; John Michell, Esq., of Kingston Russell ; George Speke, Esq., of Whitelackington, Somerset ; Henry Holt Henly, Esq., of Lee, Somerset ; Benjamin Derby, Esq., of Shirburn, Dorset ; Samuel Seely, of Chaffcombe, Somerset, gentleman ; and John Gollop, the younger, of Dorchester, gentleman. Perhaps, in the troubled state of the congregation, it was deemed prudent to appoint persons living at a distance to hold the Meeting-house. It would seem that the two Somerset county families, the Spekes and Henleys, still sympathised with the Nonconformists as they had done in the time of the Ejectment in 1672. In 1761 the Trustees appointed were :—Daniel Kingsbury, Officer of the Customs ; Wm. White, merchant ; Joseph Henley, tailor ; Joseph Kates, tailor ; Henry Marder, goldsmith ; and Joseph Brett, tailor. In 1787 mention is made of John Meech, Esq. ; Richard Bartlett, merchant ; Thomas Johns, Officer of the Customs ; Wm. Schollar, mariner ; Robert Miller, sailmaker ; and James Summerville, stonemason. A deed of 1793 gives the following names as the Committee appointed for conducting the affairs of the congregation at that period :—Samuel Weston, timber merchant ; Richard Bartlett, woollen draper ; Henry Marder, wine merchant ; Robert Miller, sailmaker ; Wm. Johns, builder ; James Summerville, mason ; Wm. Heath, corn factor ; John Russell, linen draper ; Thomas Tupper, Richard Wood and Joseph Bennett, mariners ; George Harvey, ironmonger ; and Wm. Barrett, cordwainer. A deed of 1823 contains the names of Wm. Loader, draper ; Wm. Barrett, jun., maltster ; Wm. Coleman, brazier ; Wm. Comben, master mariner ; Wm. Devenish, brewer ; Thomas Quirk, gentleman ; James Rolls, schoolmaster ; Richard



Tullidge Sainthill, gentleman; Peter Walker, mercer; James Willis Weston, timber merchant; and Charles Henry Weston, brewer.

Mr. Fenner's pastorate extended to 1712. An old record describes him as an "orthodox, pious, and laborious servant of Jesus Christ." Mr. Powell followed for a short period. In the 1st of Dissenting Churches and Ministers compiled in 1715, Mr. Powell is stated to be the Presbyterian minister, and Thomas Seamore the Baptist. It should be explained that the term "Presbyterian" at this time was almost synonymous with Non-conformist. The Presbyterian polity never came into force in the South of England, indeed the congregations were virtually Congregational, choosing their own officers and managing their own affairs.\* It is worthy of note that the communities at Weymouth, Bere Regis, Wareham, Wimborne, Blandford, and other places in the county, whilst almost always styled Presbyterian, were, during the 18th century, assisted by the *Independent* or *Congregational* Fund Board.

Stephen Edwards succeeded Mr. Powell. After some years a secession took place, probably from the Arian† tendencies of the minister, or because "his conduct was not strictly conformable to his profession" (Hutchins). A meeting-place was opened on the Weymouth side of the water; Richard Orchard, formerly at Cerne Abbas, being chosen pastor. Among the licenses issued by Quarter Sessions we find this, "109, House of Richard Orchard, Weymouth, Presbyterians, 12 Jan, 173½."‡ Thus he was certainly here early in 1732, and probably he had ministered to the people some time before this date. We learn from the Baptismal Register, deposited in Somerset House, that Mr. Orchard's place of worship was termed "The Little Meeting,"§ the Chapel occupied by Mr. Edwards being called "The Great Meeting." A grant of £5 was made to Mr. Orchard from the above-named fund in 1739, and the four following years, and

\* See pp. 31, 119, 230, 231,      † See Apendix, "Arianism."

‡ Before the reformation of the Calendar, the year ended March 31st.

§ Perhaps the following license applies to this place, "103, Newly Erected Meeting House, Weymouth, Presbyterians, 17 July, 1729."

the last entry by him in the Baptismal Register is dated February 17th, 1744.

Thomas Reader, who had resided for a time with his brother, at Wareham, was appointed Mr. Orchard's successor, and probably assisted him previous to his resignation. Soon after Mr. Reader's settlement, Mr. Edwards withdrew, and then the two congregations united under Mr. Reader as pastor, and worshipped at the "Great Meeting" in Nicholas Street.

Mr. Reader was born at Bedworth, Warwickshire. His father had attended the Church of England, but, not receiving spiritual benefit, he went to the Dissenting meeting, and found guidance and refreshment. He was a man of means, and abounded in good works. Thomas Reader was trained under his minister, Rev. John Kirkpatrick, who kept an academy. He afterwards spent some time in studying with and assisting his elder brother, Rev. Simon Reader, at Wareham. Mr. Thomas Reader removed from Weymouth in 1755, April 25th of that year, being the date of the last entry made by him in the Baptismal Register; he went to Newbury, and thence in 1771 to Paul's Meeting, Taunton,\* of which he was pastor upwards of 22 years, becoming in 1780 also tutor of the Western Academy located in that town. Among the works published by him, mention may be made of "Remarks on the prophetic part of the Revelation of St. John," which appeared in 1778. He was a devoted, earnest, able man, and a valiant defender of the cardinal truths of the gospel, at a time when serious errors were particularly prevalent.

We learn from Hutchins† that Mr. John Stamp, of London, merchant, who had bought Heffleton, between Wareham and Wool, and who died 1721, gave out of the yearly profits of all his lands, £25 per annum to each of the Dissenting ministers of Reading, Wareham and Weymouth; the remainder to such ministers (in and near London), who do not receive £40 a year. In case his wife or relations should seek to set aside this settlement, all his estate was given to the sole use and benefit of his trustees and their heirs for ever. The bequests were held to be void by a chancery suit in 1739, and the property passed to John

\* See page 344.

† Last Edition, Vol. I., p. 419.

Spillett, the surviving trustee. It may be added that on Mrs. Stamp's decease in 1750, the Wareham congregation paid £2 2s. to a Mr. Neal for examining her will, but nothing came of it.

Joseph Wilkins, born at Uley, Gloucestershire, trained in London, and at Ottery St. Mary, came to Weymouth in 1754, but was not ordained till 1759; he continued as pastor till his decease, November, 1800. "He possessed a clear and vigorous understanding, with a considerable degree of ingenuity, and was remarkable for liberality of sentiment, generosity of disposition, and uniform integrity of conduct. During his residence in Weymouth, he obtained universal respect, and that respect was preserved to the last day of his life. His end was more than peaceful. 'Death,' said he, 'is no more to me than going out of one room into another. I am ready to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.'"<sup>\*</sup> He was interred in the Friends' burying-ground, and a funeral discourse was preached in the evening by the Rev. J. Saltern, of Bridport. "It was manifest that he had read his Bible with serious and critical attention; his sermons were well studied, and contained much solid instruction." Whilst faithful in the various duties of his office, Mr. Wilkins gave attention to branches of Natural History and Philosophy, especially to Hydrostatics and Mechanics, in which he made some valuable discoveries. He also collected many curiosities, and on one occasion had the honour of submitting them to the inspection of George III. and his family, who expressed themselves as highly gratified. Some of the members of the Royal Household attended the ministry of Mr. Wilkins, with the King's knowledge and approval; one of them was a Mr. Clarke, to whom the King said, "Clarke, does your minister pray for me?" "Yes, please your Majesty, always, and very devoutly." "Then," added the King, "tell your minister I am obliged to him, . . . for you know he is not paid for it." Mr. Wilkins printed a sermon on "Self-denial," and a circular letter to the churches in the county on "Proper Behaviour in Public Worship"; he also contributed to various periodicals. He left by will £150 to the Academies, in which he had been trained,

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<sup>\*</sup> See Memoir Evan. Mag., 1804.

and £50 towards the relief of necessitous widows of Dissenting ministers. Among his assistants we find the names of Rowland Cotton Morven, 1772; James Holt, 1789; and Joseph Lamb, who came in 1790. Mr. Lamb was ordained in 1797; before this, as we learn from the Baptismal Register, he signed his name as witness to baptisms, but did not himself officiate. This was in accordance with the practice of previous ministers who do not appear to have baptized till after their ordination; the first entry made by Mr. Reader in the Register was November 5th, 1746, though he had been at Weymouth probably for some years; the first entry made by Mr. Wilkins was July 1st, 1759, though he had settled in 1754. Mr. Lamb was the son of Timothy Lamb, minister of the Pease Lane Meeting, Dorchester. He succeeded to the sole pastorate, after the decease of Mr. Wilkins in 1800, but removed the following year to Cerne Abbas, and thence in 1804 to the "Upper Meeting," Westbury.

Benjamin Cracknell, who had been minister of West Street Chapel, Wareham, for six or seven years, and Secretary to the County Association since its formation in 1795, accepted a call in 1801, and remained twenty-two years. The need of a larger and better place of worship being deeply felt, steps were forthwith taken to erect a new building. The foundation-stone was laid February 24th, 1803. During the progress of the work the congregation were allowed the use of the Guildhall. The opening took place May 20th, 1804, the Rev. W. Jay, of Bath, preaching in the morning from Matthew xviii. 20, and in the evening from Hebrews xii. 25; the Pastor himself gave a sermon in the afternoon from Genesis xxviii. 17. "The services were numerous attended, and the prospects of usefulness are very encouraging." Mr. Cracknell, after recording the history of the undertaking, adds that "while the building was in hand it was objected by some that it was unnecessarily large, yet after the Chapel had been open one month every seat was taken." A new quay wall had to be built, enclosing 17ft. of the backwater, to compensate the Corporation for the space they had given up to make the Chapel premises more convenient and accessible. The total cost, exclusive of land, was £2,547. A debt of £487 remained



after the opening, but this was all discharged by 1811. Among the contributors were Mrs. Wilkins, widow of the late Pastor, £100; Sir J. Poulteney, M.P. for the Borough, £100; Samuel Weston, £50; C. Bowles, £50; Miss Johnson, £50, on condition that 50/- was paid her annually during her lifetime; John Arbuthnot, £30, etc. Doctor Cracknell, as he had now become, published a few single sermons and contributed to magazines, especially the "Evangelical." \* He was much sought after as a preacher on public occasions, and, as Secretary of the County Association for about twenty-five years, rendered good service to the Churches. He removed in 1824 to Portland Chapel, Bath.

In 1805, the German Legion were allowed the use of the Chapel for service on Sundays, from 12 till 2 o'clock.

"May 27th, 1813, a spacious school, which will accommodate more than 300 scholars, was opened at Weymouth on the Lancastrian plan; the erection cost about £1200. The attendance was both numerous and respectable; appropriate speeches were delivered by J. Hume, Esq., W. Williams, Esq., and the Rev. Dr. Cracknell."\*

Samuel Weston, Esq., merchant, who had been the first Mayor after the Charter of 1804, and filled this office on three other occasions, was a member of the congregation, and his decease in 1817 was deeply mourned. He was an estimable, benevolent man, who by his practical sympathy earned the title of "the poor mans' friend." There is in the Guildhall a marble statue of him in his official robes, and Wyke Regis Parish Church contains a fine mural tablet to his memory.

"July 25th. The Independent Chapel at Weymouth was re-opened after an extensive reparation and the erection of two galleries. On which occasion Dr. Cracknell preached in the morning, and the Rev. John Wills, of Wareham, in the afternoon and evening. On this occasion an elegant organ was opened by Mr. Foy, junr. The congregation was large and respectable." † John B. Innes, from Camberwell, succeeded Dr. Cracknell, but held the pastorate only from 1824 to 1826. He afterwards settled

\* Evangl. Mag., 1813.

† Evangl. Mag. 1819, p. 467.

at Norwich. H. J. Crump became pastor in 1827, and was ordained in March of that year, the Rev. J. A. James, of Birmingham, giving the charge to the minister. After eleven years of faithful and successful service, he left to become Chaplain of Mill Hill Grammar School. Entire harmony prevailed during Mr. Crump's ministry, and the parting took place amid strong expressions of esteem, affection, and regret. A presentation was made to him of a silver teapot, basin, and cream jug; also of a silver-mounted ivory case containing the names of 111 subscribers. A British day-school existed at this time, and was, doubtless, supported mainly by the Nicholas Street people. J. C. Bodwell, A.M., from America, filled the pulpit from 1838 to 1845; but his ardent advocacy of total abstinence, and the utterance of peculiar views on baptism, gave offence in some quarters, and dissension and secession followed.

John Thomas Smith was chosen pastor in 1845, and remained till 1860, when he removed to Sydling. His first charge was at Oakhill, in Somerset, where he laboured faithfully for 16 years, till his removal to Weymouth. Whilst here he took a special interest in the welfare of seamen. He established the "Bethel," was Secretary of the local branch of the "Sailors' Society," and supplied each ship that left the port with a box of books. "His preaching was generally acceptable, and displayed a well stored and cultivated mind. His character, however, rather than his preaching, gave him his standing and influence in the town and county. His gentle spirit and bearing, his courtesy and readiness to serve anyone needing his help, secured for him an unusual amount of esteem and love."\* After 10 years of valued and useful missionary work at Sydling, Cerne Abbas, and the surrounding villages, he retired in 1870 to Dorchester, and died in 1872.

It may be mentioned, as shewing the kindly feeling towards other sections of the church of Christ in the town, that in August, 1857, whilst the school room belonging to St. Mary's Church was undergoing enlargement and repair, the school-rooms at Nicholas Street were lent for the use of the infant

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\* Congl. Year Book, 1873.

school; the Baptists, in 1859, whilst their own chapel was in the builder's hands, worshipped in Nicholas Street, the ministers taking the services on alternate Sundays. In 1853-4, the 42nd and 72nd Highlanders attended the chapel; and a special service was held when the latter regiment embarked for the Crimean war.

About the year 1856 various alterations and improvements were effected in the chapel, the cost being borne mainly by Dr. Watts, a retired medical man.

Robert Stone Ashton, B.A., trained at New College, removed from Jersey to Weymouth in 1861. Mr. Ashton's character and labours were much valued during the 11 years of his stay; the church was peaceful and prosperous; his brethren evinced their confidence by appointing him the County Secretary, and his gentleness and courtesy won him many friends. In 1872 he left to become secretary of the "Evangelical Continental Society," and died 1893.

The great work accomplished during Mr. Ashton's ministry was the erection of the New Church and Manse. Through various changes, especially the removal of the bridge connecting the two parts of the town to a point further down the harbour, the old chapel, though at one time in a favourable position, was now in a back street and difficult of access; the building itself, moreover, was gloomy and unattractive, quite unsuitable for a growing town much frequented by visitors. A freehold site was purchased in Gloucester Street for £700. Mr. Bennett, architect, prepared the plans, and Mr. S. Brown contracted for the work. The opening services were held June 22nd, 1864, the Revs. David Thomas, B.A., of Bristol, and Henry Allon, of Islington, preaching on the occasion. The collections during the day, including profit on the tea, realised about £100.

The building is in the Norman style of architecture; the exterior is substantial and imposing; and the chief entrance is by a bold, graceful Norman archway. The pews on the ground floor are so arranged that the occupants may all see the preacher without having to turn the head. The pulpit, of Caen stone, is an elaborate and beautiful piece of workmanship, the carving upon it being wrought by the architect as a labour of love. The

general aspect is bright and cheerful. Sitting accommodation is provided for about 700. There is a spacious schoolroom underneath. The following sums were given by gentlemen outside the congregation: C. Jupe, Esq. (Mere), who acted as treasurer, £250; Samuel Morley, Esq., M.P., £150; W. Devenish, Esq., £120, also the handsome stained glass window in memory of his father; J. Finch, Esq., £105; J. Wilson, Esq., £105; and J. Morley, Esq., £100. The people set to work with a will; friends far and near cordially assisted; Miss Smith and the ladies of the congregation raised nearly £700 by means of bazaars and a circulating basket; collecting books and boxes brought in £361; and the old chapel was sold for £800. This great undertaking was thus brought to a successful issue, and in February, 1870, there was issued a balance sheet, shewing that all liabilities (£4,465 9s.) had been discharged. The organ, built in 1859, by Bevington and Co., at a cost altogether of £211, was transferred to the new church. The building committee comprised the deacons—Messrs. T. J. A. Buck, R. Damon, B. Seymour, R. C. Bennett,—and the following adherents: Rev. J. T. Smith, Messrs. J. Beale, Thorne, Mardon, Drew, Blackmore, Bond, Gibson, F. Mace, W. Cosens, Watts, Wallis, Allen, Newton, Watkins, and James Buck.

The manse, adjoining the church (now used for Sunday school purposes and Literary Society meetings) was built soon afterwards, and certain legacies amounting to £489 4s., were applied for the purpose with the consent of the Charity Commissioners. This sum was made up as follows: Mrs. Martha Thorne, widow of the ejected minister, bequeathed £150, which from the rise in Consols realised £203 4s.; Mrs. Thorne also gave a plot of land, which was sold for £16, this with £60 given by Mrs. Vertue Clare, and a small sum by Mrs. Sarah Thurman (who also gave a silver tankard) produced £80; and a bequest by Mrs. Susannah Madgwick of £150, realised £206, the three amounts forming the aforesaid total of £489 4s.

Jonathan Edwards's charity, created by deed, dated January 13th, 1716, consists of about two acres of land, on which some houses are built, and bears the name of "Gulleyshays." Mrs.



Comben's bequest (£97 14s. 8d.), for a Coal Fund, was permitted to be applied towards the cost of the new church, on condition that at least an equal amount (£4 10s.) should be devoted annually from the income of the place, for the purpose of supplying coal to needy persons in the congregation. Mention is made in 1806 of a bequest by Mr. Drayton, but we can find no record of its nature, probably it consisted of a garden, which has been lost.

In 1879, James Blackmore, of Radipole, miller, gave by will, for the benefit of the church, £300, which is now represented by £306 2s. 5d. in consols; the dividends for many years were set apart to form a fund, so as to replace the sums applied to the building of the manse.

Lack of space forbids more than the briefest mention of recent pastorates. Edwin Bolton was minister from 1873 to 1881; educated at Hackney College, he was previously at Bromley and Preston, and is now at Northfleet, Kent.

John Wood, 1882-4, trained at Belfast, came from Reading, and is now at Bishop's Stortford.

Frank Smith, 1886-9, who after leaving the Western College had been pastor at Slough; he has since joined the Baptist body.

John Gibson, 1889-92; educated at Cavendish College, Manchester; who after filling pastorates at Angaston, South Australia, and at Warwick, came Weymouth, and is now minister at Ross.

William Tanner Hughes, educated at Carmarthen College, came to Weymouth in 1893 from Belfast, and is still the pastor, his preaching being much appreciated by a large congregation.

The present deacons are William John Newton, Richard Arthur Bolt (Deputy Supt. of Sunday School), Robert F. Damon, J. Pickard (Supt. of Sunday School), and James Pitman.

For more than two centuries many persons of high character and large influence for good have been associated with this cause. It would be invidious to mention names, but we cannot refrain from reference to an office-bearer recently deceased, Robert Damon, a man held in high esteem, famous for his scientific attainments, and whose book on the geology of Weymouth is still a standard work.

The importance of the stand taken by the ejected ministers and their adherents cannot be over estimated. They suffered and laboured, and we, indeed the whole world, are reaping the advantages. Green the historian, gives this testimony, "At the Restoration religious freedom seemed again to have been lost. Only the Independents, and a few despised sects such as the Quakers, upheld the right of every man to worship God according to the bidding of his own conscience."\*

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## WEYMOUTH. HOPE CHAPEL.

Early in the present century there was no place of worship whatever across the water on the West or Weymouth side. In 1817, a few zealous persons connected with Nicholas Street Chapel, resolved to do something for the large population (about 3,000) destitute of the public means of grace. At first a house was rented at the back of Hope Street, near Cove Quay, which was fitted up, and accommodated 100 persons; the services consisted of reading the Scriptures and prayer on the Sunday, and on two evenings in the week; then preaching was added, and the place became overcrowded.

In 1821, a Church was formed, and the following were the first members: Wm. Barrett, sen., Richard White, T. H. Tirrell and Mary Tirrell his wife, Geo. Stroud, Wm. Ayles, jun. and Ellen Ayles his wife, Ruth Shepherd, and Mary Lill. Wm. Barrett and R. White were chosen Deacons. At the same time an invitation was sent to Mr. Curtis, of Dorchester, who had taken the services for some months past, not however wishing him to give up his business, or take up his residence among them, and stating that he should "be remunerated if circumstances permit."

In the November of this year an appeal was issued soliciting funds for a new Chapel; a site was purchased from Sir Wm. Elford & Co., for £181, and a Building Committee was formed. The opening services were held Aug. 21st, 1822, Messrs. Trego

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\* Short History of the English People, p. 623.

(Martock), Roberts (Teignmouth), and Good (Salisbury), preach on the occasion. "The interest excited was very great, and the crowd of hearers, especially in the evening, was excessive." Mr. Curtis resigned in 1828.

William Bean, from Whitchurch, Hants, was chosen his successor. There had been entire harmony between the two congregations; the Nicholas Street people readily helped to meet the cost of the new building, and several consented to become trustees; the Pastor, H. J. Crump, took a personal interest in the work at Hope Chapel, and even joined in calling upon the people in order to secure their support. In 1833, the building was enlarged at a cost of £154; an organ, constructed by Mr. White, was added soon afterwards. Mr. Bean resigned in 1836 to become pastor of the Livery Street Chapel, Birmingham; he died at Brixton, 1871. "He was distinguished by great kindness and geniality of disposition and manner. He was of a cheerful temper, and always ready to help any friend, and often at personal sacrifices. He had a commanding presence, great energy of character, and a warm, brotherly heart."\*

John F. Guenett, student of the Western College, became pastor June, 1836, and was offered a minimum stipend of £80 a year. His ordination took place the September following, when Dr. Payne (President of the Western College) offered the ordination prayer with the laying on of hands, and gave the charge to the young minister from 1 Tim. iv., 6, the Rev. John Jukes (Yeovil) preaching to the people in the evening. The church prospered, but Mr. Guenett removed in 1841 to the more important charge at Bury St. Edmunds; his latter years were spent at Point-in-View, near Exmouth, where he died 1889. He was a genial cultured man, somewhat ingenious also, for he could build an organ and tune it, as well as play on it. It was on the occasion of his marriage that Dr. Raffles composed Hymn No. 988 in the Congregational Hymn Book, which begins

"Saviour, let Thy sanction rest  
On the union witnessed now."

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\* Congregational Year Book, 1872.

Mr. Lamb succeeded, but his ministry was brief, and there are no records pertaining to it.

William Smith accepted a call in June, 1844, and remained thirteen years. The father of Mr. Smith was a large farmer and landowner near Westbury. His first pastorate was at Shaldon in Devon; from Hope Chapel, he removed to Holt, in Wilts, where he laboured happily and successfully for many years. His latter days were spent at Weymouth, where he died 1887, aged 87. "His life was one of quiet, yet thoroughly effective service for Christ. Successful as a preacher of the gospel, he was not less useful as the pastor and friend of his people. He seemed not to grow old. His kindly sympathetic nature struck all who came into contact with him, and was, perhaps, the great element of his power for good."\* In his time a debt of £200 was cleared off.

William Lewis, from the Western College, was chosen pastor early in 1858, and was ordained April 14th; Revs. E. R. Conder, M.A., J. T. Smith, W. Smith, J. Pyer (Devonport), and J. M. Charlton, M.A. (Western College) conducting the solemn services. In 1859, the organ was re-built and enlarged, and a recess constructed to receive it, at the cost of nearly £230. In 1861, a new chapel was erected on the same site; the foundation stone was laid by Matthew Devenish, Esq., of Dorchester, and a sermon was preached on the occasion by the Rev. E. R. Conder, M.A., of Poole. The new building was used for worship January 1st, 1862, but the public dedication took place on March 5th, when the Rev. G. Smith (Poplar) preached in the afternoon, and the Rev. H. B. Ingram (Paddington) in the evening. At the end of the day it was found that the total cost (£1,617) had been met, with the exception of about £300. Mr. W. Sommerville, of Bristol, made the generous offer of £50 if the debt were cleared off by the end of the year; this stirred the people to vigorous effort, and an enthusiastic meeting was held January 1st, 1863, Mr. Sommerville being present, to celebrate the extinction of the debt. In 1871, Sir Frederick Johnstone did good service, by a gift of the freehold of the

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\* Cong. Year Book, 1888.



chapel premises ; and R. N. Howard, Esq. (now Sir R. N. Howard) most kindly prepared the necessary deeds free of cost.

In 1872 meetings were held to celebrate the jubilee of the first chapel ; the same day a sale of work took place on behalf of a fund which was being raised to make the Pastor a member of the " Pastors' Retiring Fund " and procure a manse. In 1873 it was resolved to purchase No. 11, St. Leonard's Terrace, for the minister at a sum of £350. Wm. Devenish, Esq., gave the first £50, and offered to lend any amount that might be required to complete the purchase, free of interest. The entire cost (£432) was met the same year. A small mission room, was in 1884, built on a part of the manse garden, costing about £100. The large Sunday School needing increased accommodation, it was resolved to build additional rooms and a lecture hall. A cottage, garden, and coal store adjoining the chapel were secured for a term of 99 years, at an annual ground rent of £8. The memorial stone was laid November 11th, 1885, under the presidency of R. N. Howard, Esq., Mayor, and the opening took place April 21st, 1886. The total cost was about £1,000, but a considerable debt remains.

It will thus be seen that great improvements have been wrought, and large sums of money raised, during the long pastorate of 40 years. Mr. Lewis, whose uniform courtesy and readiness to serve, have won for him many friends in the town and throughout the county, has intimated his intention of resigning at the end of 1898. May the truths he has unfolded to others be his own comfort and strength in the evening of life !

Weymouth is rapidly increasing on different sides, and important extensions of the Great Western Railway are anticipated ; we trust the Congregationalists will bestir themselves to do their part in meeting the spiritual needs of a growing population.

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## WIMBORNE.

Many attempts have been made to trace the remarkably chequered history of the church in the ancient and interesting town of Wimborne. Each successive writer has dwelt upon the difficulty of making a clear and consecutive story out of the fragmentary materials at his disposal. Happily, each of them has, by his researches, enriched our stock of knowledge. These materials having been worked over, and other sources of information made available, it is hoped that the present account may be found fuller and more accurate than any of those that have preceded it.

The founder of the church was the Rev. Thomas Rowe, M.A., who was ejected from Lytchett Matravers for nonconformity in 1662, and who, after having been for some time chaplain to Mr. Moor, of Spargrove, Batcomb, Somerset, returned to Lytchett, where he ministered to a "gathered" church, which met in a private house, for the space of a year. Being compelled to remove, by the Five Mile Act, in 1665, he settled at Little Canford, a mile and a half east of Wimborne, and gathered a large congregation, collected from all the adjacent country. Mercenary motives evidently did not influence him, for he received no remuneration from his congregation, except in the last half year, when the rent of his house was paid.

But there is good reason to suppose that the spiritual work to which Mr. Rowe's ministrations gave form and shape was begun long before by good men who occupied the pulpit of the ancient Minster. As far back as October, 1599, the churchwardens complained and presented "that Thomas Norman, clarcke and minister of the churche and parish aforesaid, hathe of long tyme . . . and yeat doth refuse and abstaine to read divine searvis accordinge to her Mat's, lawes . . . and to wear such habits as is appointed bi the ecclesiastycall orders and lawes of the realme." The presentment is repeated in May and October, 1611, when it is specified "nor dothe weare a surplesse as he ought to doe." He appears to have been a bold Puritan, for,

under date "Sept. 19, 1616," we have the following: "Imprimis, we present that Mr. Thomas Norman, being silenced by the order of ye court of my Lord Grace of Canterbury, doth notwithstanding preach with us." We hear no more of Mr. Norman, but there is evidence that his teaching and example had not been without effect, for in May, 1623, we read "we present that the greatest parts of the parish doe not receive the communion three times in the yeere. Also that the ministers doe not read comon prayer as it is prescribed in the book of common prayer." The appointment of the parish ministers was in the hands of the governors of the Free (now Grammar) School, and they seem to have been affected by the Puritan spirit, so that they chose men of like mind. We know nothing of the other ministers until 1648, when a brilliant Greek scholar, the Rev. William Hunt, master of the Free School at Salisbury, was appointed. As this Mr. Hunt was ejected from his mastership for nonconformity in 1662, and afterwards became minister of a dissenting congregation in Salisbury, there can be little doubt that he carried on the work at Wimborne begun by others. His successor, the Rev. Constantine Jessop,\* who, after having been successor of the celebrated Dr. John Owen, at Coggeshall, was appointed to Wimborne in 1652 and died there in 1658; and the Rev. Baldwin Deacen, who followed Mr. Jessop, and was removed as an "intruder" in 1660, because he had not been episcopally ordained, and spent the remainder of his days as a Nonconformist minister at Bromfield, in Somerset, doubtless prepared the way for Mr. Rowe's work in the neighbourhood.

At Little Canford, Mr. Rowe was out of the storm that raged so furiously against the Nonconformists elsewhere, and was allowed to carry on his work without disturbance. Two reasons are assigned for his immunity from persecution, first that there were many influential Roman Catholic families in the neighbourhood, which the authorities did not wish to interfere with or offend, and that they could not, for very shame, trouble Mr. Rowe and leave these alone; and second, that he had powerful protectors in the family of the Trenchards, who were his life-long friends. It

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\* See Page 6.

was George Trenchard, Esq., who had presented him to the living of Lytchett, and the family was associated with Nonconformity and Liberal politics, which usually went with it, for many years. One little record shows that the immunity from persecution was one in which he and his friends felt that they could only rejoice with trembling ; for " he sometimes preached in Ashley Wood for greater security."

Mr. Rowe was not altogether alone. Other Nonconformist ejected ministers lived in the neighbourhood, and probably they met and took counsel together. In a manuscript in the Archbishop of Canterbury's library at Lambeth, dated 1669, the Bishop of Bristol, in whose diocese Dorset then was, writes : " There are many Nonconformist Ministers in the County of Dorset, within my diocese, who neither have taken nor will take the oath enjoined them by the late Act of Parliament, but have gone to private habitations five miles from any corporate town, where they often meet together about what no man knows, and hold conventicles frequently in divers places, to wit"—and here follows a number of names, among which are " Mr. Rowe, late of Lytchett Matravers, now of Hampreston. Mr. White, late of Beere, is now resident at Holt, near Wimborne. Mr. Martyn, late of Tarrant Muncton, now of Wimborne."\*

While living at Little Canford, Mr. Rowe frequently visited Wimborne, to the great joy and comfort of those who had listened to Mr. Jessop and Mr. Deacon. He preached in several places. Sometimes the services were held in the yard of the late Mr. George Oakley, hosier ; sometimes in a building long since destroyed, on the site of which a wool warehouse was afterwards built ; and sometimes in a house in the occupation of Mr. J. Howard, adjoining the spot on which the old Baptist Meeting-house was erected more than a hundred years later. On the declaration of Indulgence by Charles II. in 1672, Mr. Rowe applied for and obtained a license (May 8th, 1862) to be a Presbyterian teacher in his own house, and removed to Wimborne. In this year the first meeting-house or chapel was built, being ' the first meeting in these parts.'† Amongst the adherents of the

\* Cod. Tenn. See also pp. 248-49.

† Walter Wilson MSS.



cause at this time, the first Earl of Shaftesbury was prominent ; and Sir John Trenchard, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer in the reign of William III., and his wife, Lady Trenchard, daughter of that sturdy champion of English liberty, George Speke, Esq. (ancestor of Speke, the great African traveller), of White Lackington Hall, were warm friends and frequent attendants. Lady Trenchard appears to have been an eminently pious woman. She attended sometimes the meeting-house at Wimborne, and sometimes that of Bere Regis, until the time of her death.

Although favoured by such eminent friends as these, the cause had to encounter bitter hostility and bigoted persecution. There was, at the time when the first chapel was built, a large and important factory for the manufacture of shalloon (a light worsted fabric, first made at Châlons, in France) occupying the whole of the field now called Redcotts ; the only establishment of the kind, it is said, in England then.\* The masters were Dissenters, as were also most of the employees. To prevent them from attending the meeting-house, a fine of one shilling a service was exacted from them for not attending service at the Parish Church. We find such entries as the following in the old parish accounts, "received of Mr. Swayne for Richard Jelberts 'contempt and not going to Church' 4s." At length the workpeople found this burden intolerable. The masters, thereupon, decided to remove the business to Romsey ; and thither masters and workmen and their families, to the number of four hundred, removed, inflicting a blow upon the commercial interests of the town, from which it has never wholly recovered, and seriously weakening the cause of Nonconformity in the town. The Rev. Wm. Stone, the minister of the Minster at the time, is said to have been the chief cause of this persecution.

Mr. Rowe is described by Calamy as "a very humble, serious, man, and a close walker with God ; a strict observer of the Lord's Day, and a daily practitioner in the art of Divine medita-

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\*"The majority of the inhabitants of the three counties, Dorset, Devon, and Somerset, were employed in the woollen manufactory in the reign of Charles II. The West of England was then a great manufacturing district, particularly for serges ; these were supplanted in Holland by the Norwich stuffs." Roberts' Monmouth ii., 269.

tion. Prayer was his delight and constant exercise. . . . He was a most tender, compassionate spirit, to such as were in distress, especially on spiritual account, and had a peculiar talent in administering comfort to them; and yet he was a most awakening preacher to secure sinners. The Boanerges and the Barnabas met in him to an uncommon degree." He loved his work, and "often said that he thought no king ever took more pleasure in swaying his royal sceptre, than he did in preaching the word." He was a constant visitor of his people. "He had great serenity of mind and sweetness of temper." He passed away October 9th, 1680, in the 50th year of his age, and was buried at Lytchett, where his old friend the Rev. Samuel Hardy, the Nonconformist rector of Poole, preached his funeral sermon to a congregation all too large for the church.

The next minister was, probably, the Rev. John Sprint, who, like his predecessor, was one of the ejected ministers, having been ejected in 1662 from the rectory of Portland. He appears to have been somewhat eccentric, and to have moved about a good deal. For some years before coming to Wimborne he was the pastor of a church in the neighbourhood of Andover, where he added to his income by keeping a school. When he came is uncertain—probably about 1685, and the date of his removal is equally uncertain—probably about 1687,\* when he removed to Stalbridge.

Soon after the passing of the Toleration Act (1689) that is to say in November, 1695, Mary and Cristabella Corne transferred the land on which the chapel now stands to trustees, one of whom was the minister, the Rev. John Clifford. How long before that he had become minister, there is no documentary evidence to show. Like those who had gone before him, he was the victim of persecution. He was a native of Shaftesbury, and came to Wimborne as usher in the ancient Free School, but was dismissed from his office because he ventured to read the Scriptures and explain them, and to pray with poor sick people in their own homes, but not according to the forms of the Prayer Book. After his dismissal, he became minister of this church, removing

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\* For further particulars about him see Stalbridge, pp. 280, 1.

to Gosport about 1705. During the latter part of his ministry he was assisted by the Rev. Joseph Manston, who remained two years after his colleague's removal. The cause of Mr. Manston's removal was somewhat unusual. It appears that, before settling at Wimborne, he had been assistant to the Rev. S. Tapper, the aged minister of Lympstone, Devon. Before leaving Lympstone he had promised that in the event of the pastorate becoming vacant he would become pastor of that church. The old minister resigned in 1707 or 1708, and Mr. Manston kept his promise, and went to Lympstone, where he died April 20, 1720.

The next minister was the Rev. John Greene, who settled here not later than 1707, for in January, 1708, he baptised the daughter of the Rev. William Madgwick, of Poole, though he was not ordained until July 20th, 1708. He received his education under Dr. Thomas Goodwin at Pinner, and afterwards under the Rev. John Payne, of Saffron Walden. Before entering the ministry, he had boarded for a time, probably with a view to further study, with the Rev. Theo. Lobb, of Guildford, whose sister he married. The sermon preached on the occasion of his ordination by his brother-in-law Lobb is in print. Mr. Greene was the author of several occasional sermons and of a well-known life of Dr. Lobb.\* In 1713 he resigned, and afterwards settled at Chelmsford.

He was followed by the Rev. Miles Baxter, who came from Carlisle in 1713. He appears to have been a worthy man and held in considerable respect, though not conspicuously successful as a minister. Hutchins says that he was trustee of a local charity in 1721, which indicates that he had the confidence of his neighbours. But the spirit of persecution had not utterly died away. Thompson, who is usually well informed, says that the dissenters were in Mr. Baxter's time much persecuted by their conformist neighbours. Here is a story which he tells in illustration: "At one time they laid a plot to level the meeting-house with the ground. Mr. Constant, a Justice of the Peace, his wife being a dissenter, sent for some of the heads of the meeting—Richard Wright and Thomas Morrain—and told them to watch

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\* See more about Dr. Lobb under Shaftesbury, p. 230.

in the chapel that night. They did so. About midnight a number of men came with one Jerry, an Irish Roman Catholic, who immediately set to work on the porch. The watchers making their presence known the wretches fled. Jerry was taken, brought before the magistrates and would have been punished, had not the above gentlemen entreated the Justices to let him go. After this, they were more peaceable.”\* Mr. Baxter’s removal to Westbury, Wilts, is usually put at 1736. But this date is probably two years too late, for Miss Mary Kilsbey, of Sherborne, in her will dated Nov. 1st, 1734, left £10 to “Mr. Baxter, the dissenting minister that lately lived at Wimborne,” from which we judge that he had removed in that year.

After his departure the church is described as “destitute about a year”—a somewhat long year, we fancy.

Among the ministers who came to supply the vacant pulpit, was one man who was destined to make some mark in the world—the Rev. John Farmer. After having distinguished himself as a student in Dr. Doddridge’s Academy, he had become assistant to the Rev. David Some, at Market Harborough, in 1736, but on Mr. Some’s death in the following year he sought a pastorate elsewhere. Somehow his steps were directed to Wimborne, where he preached for a while and might have settled. He, however, preferred to accept an invitation to a struggling church at Walthamstow. Here he was very successful and “drew a rather distinguished congregation. Dr. Kippis remembered seeing between thirty and forty coaches at the meeting-house door.” Among his people was an eccentric, rich, and benevolent, old gentleman, named Coward—the founder of Coward’s Academy and Trust. Mr. Farmer became one of Coward’s trustees; after noon preacher at Salter’s Hall, where he had one of the largest congregations in London; and one of the Merchant lecturers. He was a man of shrewd sense, as will be perceived from one piece of advice, which he often gave to young preachers, “Never raise,” said he, “a difficulty, without being able to solve it.” Several of his books caused a good deal of stir at the time of their publication, especially one on “The Demoniacs.” “He

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\* Thompson MSS., Dr. Williams’ Library.



is described as tall, spare, and dark complexioned, with small near-sighted eyes. In conversation he was brilliant and vivacious, apt in paying compliments. He was never married. No portrait of him was ever taken.”\* He spent all his ministerial life, after leaving Wimborne, at Walthamstow. After a short retirement, he died at Bath in 1780.

Later on, in 1737, the Rev. — Marks came. The only thing we know about him is that, when he had been in Wimborne about two years, his elder brother died, and he became heir to his estate. This estate included the presentation to a parish living in Devonshire, and Mr. Marks seems to have thought it too good a thing to throw away, and so conformed to the Established Church in order to present himself,† While he was minister here—in 1738—James Clarke, a gardener, bequeathed a garden to the church to aid in the maintenance of the minister; also £3, to purchase a copy of Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs,” to be chained in some convenient place in the Meeting-house. Tradition says this was done, but, unfortunately, all trace of it has now been lost.

The next minister, the Rev. Wm. Benson, settled in 1739 and remained ten years. “In his time the interest was small.”‡ This may have been occasioned by the state of his health, which seems to have been unsatisfactory, for, some years before his death, he was taken with what is described as “a dead palsy,” which incapacitated him for public work. He did not, however, resign his pastorate, but engaged a Mr. Webb as his assistant for the three last years of his life. But another cause may, perhaps, be found for the low state of the church in the Arianism, which began about this time to work such havoc in the churches in the West of England. On Mr. Benson’s death, Mr. Webb was chosen to succeed him, and remained until 1752.

In 1753, the pulpit was supplied for a time by a young minister, the Rev. Timothy Lamb, a native of Wimborne, who had just completed his studies, which had been carried on first under the Rev. Simon Reader, of Wareham, and then at the Academy in Well Close Square, London, under the superin-

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\* Dict. Natl. Biog. † Hunter MSS. Brit. Mus. 24,484. ‡ Thompson MSS

tendence of Dr. David Jennings. His services proving acceptable, he was urged to become the minister, but declined, and shortly afterwards became pastor of the church at Deadman's Place, London, and eight years later removed to Dorchester, where he died in 1771.

About this time the Rev. Matthew Towgood supplied the pulpit for some time, and efforts were made to induce him to remain, but without success. He shortly afterwards settled at Poole, and removed from there to Swanage.

The congregation, now become very small, included among its members two persons of whose connection with it the church is justly proud. These were Mrs. Boston, the wife of an officer of excise in the place, and her sister, Hannah Defoe, daughters of the celebrated Daniel Defoe, author of "Robinson Crusoe." Possibly, Defoe himself sometimes worshipped amid the little flock. In his *Tour Through England*, he describes Blandford, Poole, and other Dorset towns, and surely visited his daughters. These ladies remained connected with the church until their deaths. Hannah died, unmarried, April 28th, 1759, and Mrs. Boston soon after, May 5th, 1760. They were buried in the north aisle of the Minster.

At length the people succeeded in finding a young minister, willing to accept the difficult charge, in the person of the Rev. John Punfield who settled in 1756, and was shortly afterwards ordained. After a ministry of eleven years, he removed to Carr's Lane, Birmingham, to succeed Mr. Wild. "He was much esteemed, though not a popular or very useful preacher. He had a feeble constitution, and was subject to great affliction. He closed his life in 1791, in the sixty-third year of his age."\*

After him a Mr. Cross seems to have been minister for a short time.† Nothing, however, is known about him.

The next minister—the Rev. Samuel Badcock—was probably the most remarkable man who ever presided over this historic church. Born at South Molton in 1747, he became a boy-preacher at sixteen, and, after a course of study, first at Ottery and

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\* Independency in Warwickshire. By Sibree & Caston.

† Walter Wilson MSS.

afterwards under Mr. Rooker at Bridport, he settled at Wimborne in 1768 and was ordained August 23rd, 1769. Under his popular and able preaching the congregation immediately began to revive. Unlike most boy preachers, he had strong literary tastes. It affords some indication of the kind of education given in the struggling academies which the dissenters provided for their ministers, when they were shut out of the universities, to read of Mr. Badcock that "he was a man of extraordinary talents. His attainments were wonderful and various. There was scarcely a subject he was not in some measure acquainted with, nor any branch of literature that he had entirely neglected." \* "As a reviewer, he ranks among the best known names of the last century." † His subsequent career did not fulfil the promise of his early ministry. At Barnstaple, whither he removed in 1770, "his private character became so very exceptionable that it was judged prudent for him to retire. He accordingly left Barnstaple in 1778, and was chosen at South Molton. Not finding, however, his situation among the dissenters, through his own conduct, so eligible as he could wish, he quitted the congregation in 1786, and in June following was ordained deacon and priest within a week, by the Bishop of Exeter," and became curate for a short time of Broadclyst and then of the Octagon Chapel, Bath. "He had a very considerable share in writing"—the lion's share—"the Bampton Lecture, published by Mr. White." † He died in London, May 19th, 1788. Whilst resident at Barnstaple Mr. Badcock became acquainted with a daughter of Samuel Wesley, master of Tiverton School, and elder brother of John Wesley. The publication of an account of the Wesley family, based on her statements, provoked a correspondence with John Wesley." †

After Mr. Badcock's removal the congregation seems to have gone to pieces. "The correspondence of this period represents the condition of the church as most deplorable." § Mr. Jamieson, a student of Homerton College, supplied part of 1771 and 1772, but settled at Warminster. Mr. Hobbs, from the same College,

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\* Monthly Repository, vi., 202.

† Dict. Nat. Biog.

‡ This account may be found in Nichols' Literary Anecdotes.

§ Rev. L. J. Bailey.

followed and refused two calls, one on November 5th, 1772, and again in June, 1773, and removed to Colchester, where he died in 1808, aged 71. A Mr. Hay and a Mr. Beenham also supplied. But things only grew worse. During the whole of the summer of 1773, only one preaching service was held, on which occasion Mr. Ashburner, of Poole, came over.\*

This state of things continued until November, 1773, when Mr. James Panton, of the Countess of Huntingdon's College, conducted services, and subsequently became pastor. Under his ministry the work of God revived, the young people being zealously instructed by the young pastor, who was distinguished for the earnestness of his work among the children at a period when Sunday Schools were unknown, and little was done by the Church for the religious instruction of children. After a brief ministry of four years, he passed to his reward at the early age of twenty-seven. A marble tablet in the chapel proves the value set upon his ministry by his people.

Mr. Panton was succeeded by the Rev. John Holmes, who preached for the first time April 15th, 1779, and concluded a ministry, of which the opening and closing dates are the only records, Midsummer, 1782.

In October following, the Rev. John Duncan, a Scotchman, who had previously held charges at Maidstone and at Tadley, Hants, in which last place he had been active in itinerating among the neighbouring villages, accepted a call to the pastorate and came to live here Lady-day, 1783. Whilst here he lost his wife and married the widow of Mr. Panton. He proved a most worthy and successful minister. "During his time the church regained its position and apparently exercised as great an influence as at any period of its history."\* But new difficulties arose. In 1786 thirty-four members seceded and formed a Baptist Church. Shortly afterwards the Wesleyans, at that time a rapidly growing body, commenced a service in the town and drew off some who had previously worshipped in the Congregational Chapel. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, a new chapel was built in 1788. But the church continued small. "In 1793

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\* Rev. L. J. Bailey.



it consisted of twenty-four members, most part of which are very intelligent and blessed with clear and solid views of the Gospel and well informed in their judgments.”\* The quality was good, if the quantity was small. Whilst in Wimborne, Mr. Duncan received the degree of Dr. from the University of Oxford—whether D.D. or LL.D. is uncertain. It was conferred upon him at the instance of the great Mr. Pitt. It seems that in some way Mr. Duncan came into communication with the Prime Minister, who wanted to find some new source of revenue. Mr. Duncan suggested a tax on horses, which was adopted, and served the end desired so well that Mr. Pitt deemed it necessary to make some recognition of the Wimborne Nonconformist minister’s service. Hence the degree. In 1799 Dr. Duncan removed to London, and subsequently became Pastor of the church in Peter Street, Soho, where he remained many years.

Once more we find the church having a struggle for existence. In June, 1800, Mr. John Foxell, from Hoxton Academy, settled, and was ordained October 15th. The state of the church and congregation was not, however, such as to induce him to remain long, and he removed to Penzance in March, 1804, and there he remained until his death in 1852. In the following December the Rev. D. Ralph, from Tisbury, became pastor, and removed to Pill, near Bristol, in 1811.† After him the Rev. Alexander Good, late of Sidmouth, officiated for twenty weeks, very much to the gratification of the people, but declined a cordial invitation to become their minister, and settled at Fordingbridge.

While the church was without a minister in 1812, an important new departure in church work was inaugurated by the establishment of the Sunday school, which has continued to do an increasingly good work ever since.

In June, 1812, the Rev. William Miles accepted the call of the church, and left at Michaelmas, 1819. He died at Ford in 1855. He was succeeded by the Rev. J. O. Stokes, from Honiton, whose pastorate extended from January 14th, 1820, to June, 1824, when he went to America. In August, 1824, the Rev. Samuel Spink, of North Tawton, Devon, entered on the pastorate.

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\* Walter Wilson MSS.

† See pages 109, 310.

At that time the congregation was exceedingly small, being hardly more than thirty in number. Under Mr. Spink's able ministry the work steadily progressed. In the autumn of 1829, the chapel was enlarged and a schoolroom built. After some years of harmonious and successful work, there appeared signs of dissatisfaction, and in 1844 Mr. Spinks resigned, preaching his farewell sermons on September 15th. He removed to Stockwell. On Sunday, January 5th, 1845, Mr. John Wheaton, of Highbury College, entered upon the duties of pastor, but, after preaching thirteen weeks, resigned on account of failing health.

At this time the Church was greatly helped by the counsel of the Rev. T. Durant, of Poole, W. Tice, Esq., of Sopley Park, and M. Fisher, Esq., of Blandford. Acting on the advice of these gentlemen, the Rev. Isaac Brown, of Cheshunt College, was invited to the pastorate, and on September 14th, 1845, he began his ministry, the Church promising him £100 per annum. Almost immediately after the settlement of Mr. Brown, a movement began for the building of a new Chapel, and on May 17th, 1846, the foundation stones of the building, now in existence, were laid by Mr. Brown, and Rev. Mr. Cecil, of Poole. The opening services were held on September 15th, 1846, when Rev. J. Harris, D.D., President of Cheshunt College, and Rev. E. R. Conder, M.A., of Poole, preached. Soon after this, in December of the same year, after consultation with neighbouring ministers, Mr. Brown resigned. The County Association thereupon undertook the management of affairs, and for over twelve months services were conducted by supplies, till, in August, 1848, the Rev. Theophilus Flower undertook the duties of the pastorate. He remained till May, 1853, and was succeeded by Rev. H. F. Holmes, of Boston, in Lincolnshire, who commenced his work in Wimborne on the first Sunday in April, 1854, and concluded his ministry on the last Sunday in December, 1859. The pulpit was occupied on the three first Sundays in February, 1860, by Rev. J. Keynes, of Boston, who was cordially invited to the pastorate. For twenty-three years Mr. Keynes sustained his position. Among the notable events of his ministry was the introduction of the voluntary offering in lieu of pew rents, and the erection of an organ. Failing health compelled him

to withdraw from the oversight of the Church in January, 1883. An illuminated address and a substantial testimonial were subsequently presented to him as a slight recognition of his faithful and prolonged services. Mr. Keynes continued to reside in the town, and on Oct. 2nd, 1886, after a long and painful illness passed to the higher service above.

In May 1883, Mr. E. E. Cleal, of the Bristol Institute, succeeded Mr. Keynes. He was ordained in 1884, and for seven years remained pastor of the church. During his pastorate in 1886, the church was reseated and renovated at a cost of £250, the re-opening services being conducted by Rev. J. Jackson Wray, of London. At this service the aged former pastor of the church appeared for the last time in public and read a paper upon "Independency in Wimborne," which was afterwards printed as a pamphlet. Not long after, a serious fire occurred. The congregation had hardly left the building, one Sunday morning, after a service conducted by Rev. V. P. Sells, late of Martock, who was living (retired) in Wimborne, and rendered much gratuitous service to the cause, when the heating apparatus caught fire and the building was soon in flames. Considerable damage was done to the church, the roof especially being partly destroyed. With the insurance money, £220, this was repaired, and the opportunity was taken to remove the organ to the other end of the church, behind the pulpit, and make new choir seats, which greatly improved the appearance of the church.

Up till 1889, the only accommodation for the Sunday school was a long low barn like room at the side of the chapel. In that year a new schoolroom was built at the cost of £450, and opened in October by Dr. Fairbairn, of Mansfield College, Oxford. Mr. Cleal took an active interest in the social welfare of the town, and to a great extent through his exertions the Wimborne Cottage Hospital was built to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee (1887). He was appointed the first secretary, and remained so till, owing to ill-health, he resigned his pastorate, and removed to the more bracing climate of Winton, near Bournemouth.

The first minister who preached after his resignation, Rev. Louis J. Bailey, of Ripley, Hants,\* was subsequently invited to succeed

him. Mr. Bailey also held the pastorate for seven years. During this time a scheme was set on foot for building a Manse, and a large portion of the money obtained, which remains in hand awaiting the completion of the scheme. In 1896, Mrs. Keynes died. She had been for many years the organist of the Church, and, even after her husband's resignation, had been a valued helper of the Church, and a "succourer of many." Early in 1897, Mr. Bailey accepted an invitation to New Tabernacle, London, where he now labours.

Mr. Bailey was succeeded in the same year by the Rev. E. J. H. Peach, who for the previous nine years had been minister of Nailsworth, Gloucestershire; under whose able and popular ministry the church and all the institutions connected with it continue to flourish, partaking in the growing increase and prosperity of the town.

The church, which in 1793 numbered twenty-four members and had no Sunday School, now numbers seventy-six members with one hundred and fifty scholars in the Sunday School.

O.

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## WINTERBORNE KINGSTON.

This village is situated about two miles from Bere Regis on the road to Blandford. In the time of Oliver Cromwell, the Rev. Philip Lamb, vicar of Bere, had charge also of Kingston, where he preached one part of the Lord's Day, and held a lecture once a fortnight, assisted by several of his brethren. From 1660 to 1662 the Rev. John White (son of John White, the famous "patriarch of Dorchester"), who was ejected at the Restoration from Pimperne, where he seems to have ministered for about 14 years, came to aid Mr. Lamb in the work at Bere and Kingston. We learn from Calamy that after Mr. Lamb was silenced "He continued for some time preaching in private, but at last was forced by the troubles he met with to remove to Moredon, where he preached and kept days of prayer in private, to the great benefit and comfort of many. Upon King Charles' liberty he



had a convenient place provided for him at Kingston. The people flocked from all parts to hear him, and much good was done by his ministry. Among other instances there was a remarkable one in an old gentleman near eighty, who, though he had little sense of religion, had a great kindness for Mr. Lamb, his old minister, having been much won by his great affableness, and nothing would satisfy him but he must be brought in a chair to the meeting. It pleased God to touch his heart, and make him sensible of his sin, and work a change upon him in his old age. Dying not long after, Mr. Lamb, upon occasion of his funeral, preached on Matthew xx., 6: *And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, etc.* When the licenses were called in, great severity was used, and Mr. Lamb was forced, with his family, to London, where he had not been long before he was invited by a congregation at Clapham, in Surrey, where he spent the rest of his days."\* (See Bere Regis).

We have been unable to find among the licenses issued in 1672 any for a building at Kingston for Mr. Lamb. It may be of interest to give a list of the licenses issued that year in this village and the surrounding district.

The house of Richard Woolfreyes in Winterborne Kingston, and James Hallett to be a Congregational teacher in the said house, June 10th. The house of Timothy Sacheverill, in Winterborne Zelston, to be a Presbyterian meeting-place, and himself to minister therein, May 8th. The house of Philip Lamb, in East Morden, to be a Congregational meeting-place, and himself to be a Congregational teacher therein, May 1st. The house of Thomas Moore, in Milton Abbas, to be a Presbyterian meeting-place, and himself to be a teacher in his own house, May 16. John White, of Morden, to be a general Presbyterian teacher, May 8th. The house of George Filliter, sen., in West Morden, for Presbyterian worship, November 18th. Other licenses were issued in the district, but lack of space forbids their insertion. The strength of Nonconformist conviction and feeling may be inferred; indeed, it is evident that the spiritual heroes, residing in Kingston and the vicinity at this time, who

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\* Memorial ii., p. 116.

preferred a clear conscience to a comfortable living, had a considerable following. We can fancy how these worthy men, Hallett, Sacheverill, Lamb, Moore and White, companions in tribulation, and sufferers for the truth, would be confirmed and refreshed by fellowship with one another, and how they would be cheered and strengthened by the number who held them in honour and sought their ministry; the influential families of Erle and Trenchard seem to have had sympathies in this direction, and gave what protection they could. The five names mentioned above were appended to the letter of thanks sent by the Dorset Nonconforming ministers to the King for granting freedom of worship; this privilege was withdrawn in 1673, and the persecution renewed.

So far as we can ascertain, nothing was done, apart from the Church of England, for the spiritual interests of Kingston, till the year 1830, when the County Association made a small grant of £3 10s. to the minister of Bere Regis in order that he might visit the people of this parish and hold services. The origin of the present Congregational Church must be traced to a conference held at Blandford. Messrs. H. F. Fisher, J. Hobbs, John Gill, George Henville, and P. C. Etheridge met together to take into consideration the deplorable condition of Kingston and what could be done on its behalf. The portraits of these friends, the real founders of the mission, are grouped in a picture, which is framed and hung up in the vestry. The people at that time are described as "benighted and almost destitute of religious instruction." There was but one service at the church on the Sunday, and this partaking rather of a perfunctory and lifeless character; there was no Sunday School, the young people grew up ignorant, unruly, and violent, so that it was hardly safe for a stranger to walk through the village in the evening; godliness and morality were at a low ebb. The Sunday School was started April 27th, 1845. The first teachers and preachers came out from Blandford and were, for the most part, members of the above-named conference; they were hospitably entertained by Mr. Thomas Henville. Services were held for twelve months in the cottage of John Burden, and the school was carried on in Mr. Miller's rooms under the same roof.

The site for the chapel was purchased by Mr. Henry Field Fisher (grandson of Henry Field, the honoured Pastor at Blandford for sixty-six years till his decease in 1821), and the building was erected at his sole expense. The opening services were held in 1846, and in these the Rev. R. Keynes, of Blandford, and Mr. Tice, of Sopley Park, took a leading part.

About 1853 the Rev. J. Edwin, of Bere, did a little pastoral work, and held a service every Thursday evening.

Messrs. E. J. Gill, R. Cuming, H. Brown, H. Sawe, J. McWilliam and others, joined at an early period in carrying on the work

On February 4th, 1855, Messrs. Fisher, Henville, and E. J. Gill left Blandford to conduct the evening service at Kingston, whilst a fearful snowstorm prevailed; they found the ordinary road quite impassable, and were compelled to go round by Whitchurch; after service they found it necessary to go home by way of Charborough, Sturminster Marshall, and Spetisbury, a tedious and perilous journey.

The drive from Blandford to Kingston is an exposed one, and for our friends to undertake it in all weathers implies no little courage and endurance. On two occasions however, in 1881, and on January 13th, 1895, the snow lay so deep in some parts of the highway, that to reach the village was quite impossible.

The name of Charles Pond will ever be gratefully and tenderly linked with this place; for 30 years prior to his lamented decease, September 29th, 1881, he took part in the work, and for 15 years of that period he went every Sunday with scarcely an exception. A devout humble follower of Jesus Christ, his labours were indefatigable, and the welfare of the little cause was very dear to him. For many years he filled the office of deacon at Blandford, and also of treasurer to the County Association. "The memory of the just is blessed." Mr. Thomas George, who had been Mr. Pond's assistant since 1878, became superintendent after his decease, which he continued with much zeal and success, till the end of 1894, when he resigned, feeling incapacitated on account of increasing deafness.

Mr. A. W. Backway, who has taken part in the work for the

past 17 years, succeeded Mr. George, and is animated by the same spirit of devotion and fidelity as marked his predecessors.

Mention should be made of Samuel Griffiths, who, from 1882, took every third Sunday at Kingston for about eight years, till his removal to Weston-super-Mare. Here he was soon appointed deacon, and a useful promising career seemed to lie before him but death removed him July 5th, 1890.

Mr. Pond had projected the enlargement and renovation of the Chapel, which was afterwards carried out, and a re-opening service was held Nov. 1884. The meeting, presided over by Mr. J. J. Hobbs, a former preacher and teacher at Kingston, was addressed by Revs. B. Gray, W. Densham, J. R. F. Ross, and Messrs. J. McWilliam, T. George, H. Dudderidge and H. Hodges. The total cost, about £209, was more than met on the day of opening. Friends at Blandford had contributed £90, the teachers had collected about £63, whilst the people at Kingston had raised about £44. The announcement of a balance in hand of £11 (afterwards augmented) was received with great delight, and the sum of £7.7s. od. was gladly voted to the kindred cause at Spetisbury, towards the reduction of their small debt. The new lobby, vestry, and schoolroom (divided from the chapel by folding doors) are valuable additions to the property.

An American organ for use in the services was presented Oct. 15th, 1891, by the late Miss E. A. Backway, of Blandford, an earnest gifted lady, who on several occasions conducted the Sunday evening meeting with great acceptance. The Jubilee service, held May 16th, 1895, was very fitly presided over by Mr. J. McWilliam, who had shewn much sympathy with the work at Kingston, and at an early period had taken part in it, and whose honourable and useful career terminated at Bournemouth in 1897. The presence of Mr. H. Brown, also one of the early teachers, added much interest to the meeting, and the hearty welcome accorded to these veterans seemed like a foretaste of the Master's greeting, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The gathering, addressed by several ministers and friends, was most successful, and left joyous and hallowed memories in the hearts of all who were present.



The removal of Mr. and Mrs. James Henville, fast friends and efficient helpers, to Upwey in 1896, was a cause of deep regret to the people with whom they had been so long and happily associated.

The autumnal meetings of the County Association were held at Kingston, for the first time in its history, on September 30th, 1897. There was a considerable gathering for prayer in the morning; the Rev. T. Evans, of Bournemouth, preached in the afternoon; and a public meeting was held in the evening, with the Rev. T. R. Steer in the chair. The attendance was large, drawn from various parts of the county, much devout earnest feeling prevailed, and the kind hospitality of the Kingston and Blandford friends was fully appreciated.

Mr. and Mrs. Riggs, Mr. Alfred Hobbs, and Mr. J. Brown render valuable assistance to Mr. Backway in conducting the school and services. The communicants number 42, and the present deacons are Messrs. Noah Wellstead, Henry Mowlam, and Wm. Wellstead. The worthy men who, for more than half a century, have held forth the word of life at Kingston, at the cost of much labour and self-sacrifice, without fee or reward, are deserving of all honour; though doubtless the work itself has brought its compensations,—in teaching they have learnt, in helping they have received strength, and in cheering others they have been made glad. The opinions and principles contended for by the brave and noble sufferers who preached the gospel in this district nearly 230 years ago, have been revived and perpetuated in this mission. The purpose for which it was established has been to a large extent accomplished; in union with other agencies, a marked spiritual and moral improvement has been wrought; and not a few have gone forth from this little place, with clear views and warm hearts, to live the gospel and work for the Master elsewhere.

D.

# APPENDIX.





## APPENDIX.

### I.—MINISTERS EJECTED OR SILENCED IN THE COUNTY OF DORSET.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Alleine, William, M.A	... Blandford	... See page 28.
Avianen, Brigidius	... Stoke Abbott	... See page 289.
Backaller, Henry	... Chideock	... See page 80. First Minister of Chard, 1672-1687
Bampheld, Francis, M.A...	Sherborne	... See pages 244-250.
Bartlett, Robert	... { Compton Hawey { or Over Compton	See pages 94-97.
Benn, William, M.A.	... Dorchester	... See pages 115, 160.
Bennett, Edward, M.A.	... Morden	... Previous to taking this living in 1654, he was for some years at South Petherton, Somerset, "where he was greatly beloved." After his ejection he returned to South Petherton at the earnest request of many members of his old flock, and ministered to them, and held services in the surrounding villages, as he had opportunity: whilst preaching, on one occasion, he was seized and cast into Ilchester jail, where he was confined for two months. He died November 8th, 1673. "He strictly adhered to his principles in all the turns of the times, and kept a clear conscience and an unspotted reputation to the last."
Boaden, Thomas	... Buckland Newton	"Probably Curate" (Hutchins). See page 66.



<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Boult, Thomas	... Compton Abbas...	All we know of him is Hutchins' statement, "Thomas Boult, 1647. He is supposed to have been ejected for Nonconformity, 1664."
Bowyer, —	... Unknown ...	Calamy just mentions the name, giving no particulars. The name is not in the Morrice MS.
Brice, John	... Marshwood ...	See pages 81-83, 89.
Chaplyn, Thomas	... Wareham ...	See page 336.
Churchill, Joshua	... Fordington ...	See page 116. Preached sometimes at Mr. Thos. Groves's house at Fern, Wilts (Cod. Ten.) Dedicated a volume of Mr. Benn's sermons, which he published, to Mr. Groves.
Clifford, Isaac	... Bettiscombe ...	Of Brazenose College, Oxford. Born at Frampton. "He was eminent for piety and an ingenious preacher." Preached at Mr. Groves', Fern. "Being cast into Dorchester jail, on account of his Nonconformity, his confinement brought him immaturity to his grave."
Crabb, Joseph	... Beaminster ...	Afterwards conformed. See page 6.
Crane, Thomas, M.A.,	... Rampisham ...	See pages 6, 98, 225.
Dammer, Edward	... Wyke Regis ...	See page 89, 118, 221.
Deacon, Baldwin	... Wimborne ...	After his ejection he lived and preached at Bromfield, Somerset. He lost his sight several years before his death.
Downe, Richard, B.D., D.D.	{ Winterborne- Muncton	See page 47.
Eaton, John	. Bridport ...	See page 46.
Elford, John	... Ryne Intrinseca..	Name included in Morrice's list. Hutchins says, "Probably intruder." Here many years.
Forward, John	... Melbury Bubb ...	Instituted 1648 on the sequestration of William Handleigh, "late Bubdown, now resident at Woolcombe." Cod. Tenn.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
French, Jeremiah	... South Perrott ...	A native of Suffolk. Educated at Cambridge. Minister successively of Newport (Isle of Wight), Yeovil, and South Perrott, from which last place he was ejected in 1662. Retired to an estate which came to him through his wife (a native of Clifton Maybank) at Bradford Abbas. Preached there and at Crewkerne, Merriott, and elsewhere. May 8th, 1672, took out a license for his house at Bradford Abbas, called "The Court Baron." On the calling in of the Indulgence he was so hotly persecuted that he left his house, and durst not return even to see his wife on her death-bed. At length trouble so broke his spirit that he fainted away and died May 10th or 11th, 1685, aged 59.
Galpin, John	... Durweston ...	He was appointed by the Committee of the County in 1645, in place of Richard Hooke, sequestered. Preached at Winsham (1668) at the houses of Henry Henty and John Bennett.
Gundry, Hugh	... Mapperton ...	"He continued a Nonconformist all his days. After his ejection he preached mostly in Devonshire, often at Newton. He was one of the twelve in that county who took the oath required by the Five Mile Act." Calamy.
Hall, —	... Buckland Newton	Probably Curate to Mr. Weekes.
Hallett, James	... Shaftesbury ...	In Morrice's list of ejected ministers we have : " — Hallett, Jun., of Peter's Shastone." James Hallett took out a license to be a Congregational Teacher in the house of Richard Woolfreyes, at Winterborne Kingston ; also to be a Presbyterian Teacher in the house of John Dammer, Cerne, June 10th, 1672. He was one of the thirty-eight Dorset ministers who signed a letter of thanks to Charles II. for the Indulgence, May 10th, 1672. See page 227 where he is called, in error, <i>Thomas Hallett</i> , Junr. There is nothing to show whether he was Rector or only Curate to his father—the minister next named.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Hallett, Thomas	... Shaftesbury ...	Calamy gives only "Mr. Hallett" as ejected from Shaston. The Bishop of Bristol (Cod. Tenn. 1669) says "Mr. Hallett, late of Shaston, now of Horton." Morrice says "Thomas Hallett" was one of the ejected ministers, but does not say from what place he was ejected. Probably the truth is reached by combining the statement. In the list of Admissions to livings in this county in 1658 (Augmentations 999 in Lambeth Palace Library), "Tho. Hallett, of Shaston," signs the certificates of Thomas More admitted Rector of Hammoone, and James Rawson admitted Rector of Hazelbury. The Halletts were most likely father and son. There is no mention of either of the Halletts in Hutchins, but there appears to be nothing in the parish registers inconsistent with what the evidence seems to point to, viz.: that two ministers of the same name were ejected from Shaftesbury. See page 227.
Hammond, George, M.A.	... Dorchester ...	See page 115. Took the oath required by the Five Mile Act.
Hardy, John, M.A.	... Simondsbury ...	This is one of the richest livings in Dorset. Hardy was younger brother of Samuel Hardy, of Poole. Born at Frampton. Educated at Wadham College, Oxford. He was one of the ministers appointed to visit Charles II. before the Restoration and whose visit resulted in the famous declaration from Breda. He was also one of the ministers who preached before Parliament in Westminster Abbey on the thanksgiving for the Restoration. After leaving Simondsbury he lived at Southwick, Hants, where he died about 1668, aged about thirty-five.
Hardy, Samuel	.. Poole	... See pages 66, 186, 187.
Hearne, Arthur	... Wimborne	... Appears to have died soon after the ejection. The parish register shows that he was buried in the Minster, 1662.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Hodder, John	... Hawkchurch ...	See pages 127-129.
Hunt, Richard	... Corfe Castle ...	See page 104.
Hussey, William	... Hinton Martell...	He was appointed in 1646 in the place of James Crouch ejected by the Committee of the County. Crouch was restored in 1661. Hussey was one of those who gave Certificates (1658) to Thomas Rowe for his appointment to Lytchett Matravers and to John Dore for the living of Almer. This is all that is known about him.
Kerridge, John, M.A.	... Lyme Regis ...	Schoolmaster of Abingdon, afterwards of Lyme Regis. See pages 81, 148, 149.
Kerridge, John	... Wootton Fitzpaine	Father of the above. Calamy says he was ejected, as does also Morrice. Hutchins says that he would have given up the living if he had not died shortly after the passing of the Act of Uniformity.
King, George	... Puddletown ...	He gave a Certificate for James Rawson appointed Rector of Hazelbury, June 30th, 1658.
Lamb, Philip	... Bere Regis ...	See pages 17, 71.
Lawrence, Christopher	.. Winterborne Came	See page 117. Died May 15th, 1667, and was buried in Allhallow's Church, Dorchester. "His Non-conformity exposed him to uncommon losses, but he endeavoured to approve himself to Him, who, he knew, could make all good to him and his."
Light, John	... { Preston and Sutton Pointz ...	Though not mentioned by Hutchins, he is given by Calamy and Morrice as among the ejected. They do not name the place from which he was ejected, but we know that as minister here he gave a certificate for the appointment of John Brice to Chickerell, February 9th, 1659 (Augmentations 999).



<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Martin or Martyn, Henry, Tarrant Monckton	Instituted Vicar 1627. Signed letter of thanks for Indulgence 1672. Licensed as Presbyterian Teacher in his own house at Tarrant Monckton, May 8th, 1672.	
Miles, John	... Chardstock	... Morrice gives "John Miles of Chostoke." He was probably curate.
Mills, Benjamin	... Chardstock	... "He had a full congregation while he was in the public church, and it was observed that the parish in general was, at that time, more civilized than it was known to be either before or since." Calamy. Held services after his ejection at Wayford "in the house of one Widow Darby," and at Chard (Cod. Tenn. 1669). Took out a license to be a Presbyterian Teacher at Chard, May 8th, 1672.
Mitchell, John	.. Langton Matravers	"All the inhabitants of the place honoured him, and some gentlemen, who were warm enough for the Church of England, waited on the Bishop, in order to his keeping his living; but nothing would do without that entire conformity, in which he could by no means be satisfied." Calamy.
Moore, John	... Holnest	... He served Long Burton, a chapelry of Holnest, five years after the Act of Uniformity, but was at length silenced. Afterwards retired to his own estate at Ottery St. Mary, preaching in the district around, and often in great peril. In 1676 became pastor of a large Dissenting congregation at Bridgewater, to which, at one time, all the magistrates in the town belonged. He also conducted an Academy for training students for the ministry. He died August, 1717.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Moore, Thomas, M.A.	... Hammoon	... After his ejection he and his family suffered great want. He was offered by the Trenchards, the owners of the living, the parsonage to reside in again and again ; "but he still refused it, because he could not be satisfied with the terms of conformity. Rather than violate his conscience he chose to live in want and obscurity." He removed to Milton Abbas, and there took out a license for services in his own house, May 16th, 1672. On Sept. 30th, he was licensed to be a preacher and teacher at the house of Robert Alford, Sturminster Newton. He died at Milton Abbas, August, 1699.
Morgan, —	... Unknown	... Calamy and Morrice both give the name.
Murrell, Francis	... Beerhacket	... Was presented to the living by John Strode, July 7th, 1658. Certificates were given by ministers in Gloucestershire, from which county he came.
Parsons, Henry	... Burstock	... Born about 1630. "He was a man of good learning, and had episcopal ordination." He suffered much for his Nonconformity. For preaching at Chard, Taunton, and elsewhere, was imprisoned in Ilchester, Dorchester, and Devon county jails, and finally, soon after Monmouth's defeat, in a vile dungeon in one of the Western jails. Soon after his ejection he was offered the living of Uplyme, worth about £300 a year, and was solicited by the patron to accept it ; but Mr. Parsons told him his conscience would not permit him to do so. After the Revolution, he settled as minister at Stoke-under-Ham, where he died in 1717.
Paul, Robert	... Pillesden	... See pages 98, 332, 357.
Phillips, Humphrey, M.A.	Sherborne	... See pages 246-252.
Pinney, John	... Broadwindsor	... See pages 62, 169, 273, 332.
Prince, John	... Hawkchurch	... Given in the Morrice MS Probably Curate.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Rawson, James	... Hazelbury Brian	Was here some years before he was formally inducted to the Rectory, vacant through the sequestration of Thomas Clarke (Lansdown MSS. 459). He was presented to the living in 1658 by the Earl of Northumberland. In King Charles the First's time he was a Conformist, but thought the terms of Conformity, after the Restoration, too rigorous.
Rowe, Thomas, M.A.	... Lytchett Matravers	See pages 194, 385-389.
Sacheverell, Timothy	... Tarrant Hinton	Great uncle of Dr. Sacheverell of Queen Anne's time. Preached quietly in the parish till the Five Mile Act when he removed to Winterborne Zelston. In 1672, May 8th, took out a license for his house there. His last years were spent at Salisbury, where he preached gratis as long as he lived. He died in 1680.
Salway, John	... { Whitchurch- Canonicorum	Was afterwards minister at Kilmington, Devon.
Sampson (or Sansome), William	} Bradpole ...	Was here in 1646 when he was allowed £15 15s. out of Lord Digby's Estate. Was at Chard, 1672. Signed himself "Sansome" in a Certificate for Thomas Drante, Melbury Samford, 24th Dec., 1658.
Short, Ames, M.A.	... Lyme Regis	... See pages 143-148
Shute, Richard de	... Stalbridge	... See page 279.
Sprint, John	... Portland	... See pages 217, 280-281.
Thorne, George	... Weymouth	... See pages 81, 90, 367-369.
Trottle, John, Junr.	... Spettisbury	... Calamy, index only. Morrice MS. See page 275.
Troyte, Thomas	... Ower Moigne	... See page 118.
Tucker, Mr.	... Horton	... Given by Calamy only. Not in the Morrice list.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Wakely, Nicholas	... Thorncombe ...	In 1662 Thorncombe was reckoned in Devonshire. Mr. Wakely was at first tempted to conform, having a wife and several children. But at length resolved to cast himself upon God and his providence. See page 128.
Way, Benjamin	... West Stafford ...	See pages 114, 117. "Late Rector of West Stafford hath taken the oath and is resident at Dorchester" (Cod. Tenn.).
Way, Henry	... Portland ...	Calamy and Morrice call him "junior." Was he the son of Benjamin Way above? Hutchins says he was appointed to this living on the sequestration of Dr. Henchman in 1643. Dr. Henchman became Bishop of Salisbury, 1660. Henry Way gave a Certificate August 25th, 1658, on the appointment of John Dore to the Rectory of Almer.
Weekes, John	... Buckland Newton	See page 66.
Wesley, Bartholomew	... { Charmouth and Catherston- Lewiston	See pages 80, 184.
Wesley, John, M.A.	... { Winterborne- Whitchurch	See pages 29, 80, 114, 181.
White, John	... Pimperm ...	See pages 399, 400.

NOTE. It would be impossible for anyone to investigate the effect of the Act of Uniformity without coming to the conclusion that many other ministers besides those mentioned above were ejected or silenced in this County. But the present state of our information makes it impossible to prove it. The above list, however, shows that, as far as Dorset is concerned, Calamy's statements, instead of being exaggerated, are considerably under the truth. Of the names in it, sixty-four are mentioned by him, while nine have been gathered from other sources. Calamy's information has been revised and corrected from other and later authorities.



# II.—EJECTED MINISTERS WHO CAME TO RESIDE AND LABOUR IN DORSET

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Banger, Josiah, M.A.	... { Broad Hembury, Devon	See pages 20, 71, 252.
Buckler, Edward	... Calbourn, Hants..	He was appointed to succeed Dr. Henchman (sequestered) at Wyke Regis, October 8th, 1646, and was there in 1654 (Lansd. MSS, 459). He was one of Cromwell's Chaplains, and after his ejection came back into Dorset, living privately at Bradford Abbas, where he followed the trade of malting, preaching only occasionally. On May 2nd, 1672, he took out a license to be a Presbyterian teacher in his own house at Bradford Abbas.
Devenish, John	... Weston, Somerset	Came to reside at Pulham, where he took out a license to preach, September 5th, 1672.
Eastman, William	... Everley, Wilts ...	See pages 229, 338.
Gill, John	... Shute & Colyton	"After his ejection he continued a humble pious preacher among the Dissenters till his death, which was about 1688." See also page 129.
Goss or Goffe, John	... Hackfield, Hants	See page 280.
Hallett, Joseph	... { Chiselborough, Somerset	See pages 46, 47.

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Place Ejected from.</i>	<i>Notes.</i>
Littlejohn, Jeremiah	... { Bratton Seymore, Somerset	A native of Bratton. Educated at Cambridge. Had his grammar learning at Bruton and at Sherborne under Mr. Lyford. After his ejection he purchased an estate at North Cadbury, where he lived for some time. Took out a license, July 24th, 1672, to be a Presbyterian in the house of Robert Berren, at Gillingham or any other allowed place. [The original license, one of the very few that have been preserved, is in the Congregational Library, Memorial Hall, London]. He died March 2nd, 1680, aged 55.
Sacheverell, John	... { Wincanton, Somerset	See pages 119, 228, 279, 280.
Torner, John	... North Cricket ...	See pages 6, 9, 356.
Walters, Benjamin	... Unknown ...	"Mr. Benjamin Walters, minister of the Presbyterian persuasion, desires a license for the exercise of his ministry at his own house, situate in Bradford Abbas, Dorset, by me, John Warn, June 10th, 1672." State Pap. Dom. Car. II., 321. Signed letter of thanks to the King for Indulgence, May 10th, 1672.
Bond, John, LL.D.	... The Savoy ...	See page 306. Calamy says he was Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge.
Bruncker, —.	... Trent, Somerset.	Walker says he was ejected in 1660, when Dr. Wrench, the sequestered minister was restored. See page 128.

## III.—CORPORATION ACT, 1661.

This Statute enacted "That all mayors, aldermen, recorders bailiffs, town clerks, common-council-men, and other persons bearing any office or offices of magistracy, or places of trusts, or other employment, relating to or concerning the government of cities, corporations, and boroughs, shall take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and this oath following :

" 'I, A.B., do declare and believe, that it is not lawful under any pretence whatsoever to take arms against the king ; and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those that are commissioned by him.'

" They shall also subscribe the following declaration :

" 'I, A.B., do declare, that there lies no obligation upon me from the solemn league and covenant, and that the same was an unlawful oath imposed on the subject against the laws and liberties of the kingdom.'

" That no person shall hereafter be elected or chosen into any of the offices or places aforesaid, that shall not have, within one year next before such election or choice, taken the sacrament of the Lord's supper, according to the rites of the church of England ; and that every person so elected shall take the aforesaid oaths and subscribe the said declaration."

Neal's History of the Puritans, Vol. iii., 83-4.

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## IV.—ACT OF UNIFORMITY, 1662.

By this Act it was enacted "That every parson, Vicar, or other minister whatsoever, who now hath and enjoyeth any ecclesiastical benefice or promotion within this realm of England, shall in the church, chapel or place of public worship belonging to his said benefice or promotion, upon some Lord's day before the feast of St. Bartholomew, which shall be in the year of our Lord 1662, openly, publicly, and solemnly read the morning and evening prayer appointed to be read by and according to the Book of Common Prayer, at the times thereby appointed ; and after such reading thereof, shall openly and publicly, before the congregation there assembled, declare his

unfeigned assent and consent to the use of all things in the said book contained and prescribed in these words and no other. I, A.B., do here declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book intituled 'The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of England, together with the Psalter or the Psalms of David, pointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches : and the form or manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of bishops, priests, and deacons.'

"And that all and every such person who shall neglect or refuse to do the same within the time aforesaid, shall, *ipso facto*, be deprived of all his spiritual promotions.

"And be it further enacted that . . . every parson, vicar, curate and every other person in holy orders and every schoolmaster shall before the feast day of St. Bartholomew, 1662, subscribe the declaration or acknowledgment following :—I, A.B., do declare that it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatsoever to take arms against the King : and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority against his person, or against those that are commissioned by him : and that I will conform to the liturgy of the church of England as it is now by law established : and I do declare, that I hold there lies no obligation upon me, or any other person, from the oath commonly called, The Solemn League and Covenant, to endeavour any change or alteration of government either in Church or State ; and that the same was in itself an unlawful oath, and imposed on the subjects of this realm against the known laws and liberties of this Kingdom. Upon pain that all and every of the persons failing in such subscription shall forfeit his place and be utterly disabled and *ipso facto* deprived of the same.

"That no person who now is incumbent and in possession of any parsonage, vicarage or benefice, and who is not already in holy orders by episcopal ordination, or shall not before the said feast day of St. Bartholomew be ordained priest or deacon according to the form of episcopal ordination, shall have, hold, or enjoy the said parsonage, etc.. or other ecclesiastical promotion within this Kingdom, but shall be utterly disabled and all his ecclesiastical promotions shall be void as if he was naturally dead.

"That if any person who is by this Act disabled to preach any lecture or sermon, shall preach any sermon or lecture ; that then, for



every such offence, the person or persons so offending shall suffer three month's imprisonment in the common gaol, without bail or mainprize ; and that any two justices of the peace, and the Mayor or other chief magistrate of any city or town corporate, upon certificate from the ordinary of the place made to him or them, of the offence committed, shall, and are hereby required to commit the person or persons offending, to the gaol of the county, city or town corporate.

"If any schoolmaster or other person shall instruct or teach any youth as a tutor or schoolmaster, before license obtained from his respective archbishop, bishop or ordinary of the diocese, and before such subscription or acknowledgment made as aforesaid ; then he shall for the first offence suffer three months' imprisonment, without bail ; and for every second or other offence three months' imprisonment, without bail, and also forfeit to his Majesty five pounds."

Abbreviated from Documents relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1862.

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#### V.—FIRST CONVENTICLE ACT, 1664.

The Act declares the 35th of Queen Elizabeth to be in full force, which condemns all persons refusing peremptorily to come to church, after conviction, to banishment, and in case of return to death, without benefit of clergy. It enacts further, "that if any person above the age of sixteen, after the first of July, 1664, shall be present at any meeting, under colour or pretence of any exercise of religion, in other manner than is allowed by the liturgy or practice of the church of England, where shall be five or more persons than the household, shall for the first offence suffer three months' imprisonment, upon record made on oath under the hand and seal of a justice of peace, or pay a sum not exceeding five pounds ; for the second offence six months' imprisonment, or ten pounds ; and for the third offence the offender to be banished to some of the American plantations for seven years, excepting New-England and Virginia, or pay one hundred pounds ; and in case they return, or make their escape, such persons are to be adjudged felons, and suffer death without benefit of clergy. Sheriffs, or justices of the peace, or others

commissioned by them, are empowered to dissolve, dissipate, and break up, all unlawful conventicles, and to take into custody such of their number as they think fit. They who suffer such conventicles in their houses or barns are liable to the same forfeitures as other offenders. The prosecution is to be within three months. Married women taken at conventicles are to be imprisoned for twelve months, unless their husbands pay forty shillings for their redemption. This act to continue in force for three years after the next session of parliament."

From Neal's History of the Puritans, Vol. iii., 136-7.

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#### VI.—FIVE MILE OR OXFORD ACT, 1665.

It was entitled, "An Act to restrain Nonconformists from inhabiting corporations"; the preamble to which sets forth, "that divers parsons, and others in holy orders, not having subscribed the Act of Uniformity, have taken upon them to preach in unlawful assemblies, and to instil the poisonous principles of schism and rebellion into the hearts of His Majesty's subjects, to the great danger of the church and kingdom. Be it therefore enacted, that all such Nonconformist ministers shall take the following oath: I, A.B., do swear, that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever, to take arms against the King; and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority, against his person, or against those that are commissioned by him, in pursuance of such commissions; and that I will not at any time endeavour any alteration of government either in church or state. And all such Nonconformist ministers shall not after the 24th of March, 1665, unless in passing the road, come, or be within five miles of any city, town corporate, or borough, that sends burgesses to Parliament; or within five miles of any parish, town or any place wherein they have, since the act of oblivion, been parson, vicar, or lecturer, etc., or where they have preached in any conventicle on any pretence whatsoever, before they have taken and subscribed the aforesaid oath before the justices of peace at their quarter-sessions for the county, in open court; upon forfeiture for every such offence of the sum of forty pounds, one third to the King, another third to the poor, and a third to him that

shall sue for it. And it is further enacted that such as shall refuse the oath aforesaid shall be incapable of teaching any public or private schools, or of taking any boarders or tablers to be taught or instructed, under pain of forty pounds to be distributed as above. Any two justices of peace, upon oath made before them of any offence committed against this Act, are empowered to commit the offender to prison for six months, without bail or mainprize."

From Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. iii., 144-5.

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#### VII.—SECOND CONVENTICLE ACT, APRIL 1670.

It was to the following effect: "That if any persons upwards of sixteen years shall be present at any assembly, conventicle, or meeting, under colour or pretence of any exercise of religion, in any other manner than according to the liturgy and practice of the church of England, where there are five persons or more present, besides those of the said household, in such cases the offender shall pay five shillings for the first offence, and ten shillings for the second. And the preachers or teachers in any such meetings shall forfeit twenty pounds for the first and forty for the second offence. And lastly those who knowingly suffer any such conventicles in their houses, barns, yards, etc., shall forfeit twenty pounds. Any justice of the peace, on the oath of any two witnesses, or any other sufficient proof, may record the offence under his hand and seal, which record shall be taken in law for a full and perfect conviction, and shall be certified at the next quarter sessions. The fines above mentioned may be levied by distress and sale of the offender's goods and chattels; and, in case of the poverty of such offender, upon the goods and chattels of any other person or persons, that shall have been convicted of having been present at the said conventicle, at the discretion of the justice of the peace, so as the sum to be levied on any one person, in case of the poverty of others, do not amount to above ten pounds for any one meeting; the constables, headboroughs, etc., are to levy the same by warrant from the justice, and to be divided, one third for the use of the king, another third for the poor, and the other third to the informer or his assistants, regard being had to their diligence and industry in discovering, dispersing and

punishing the said conventicles. The fines upon ministers for preaching are to be levied also by distress ; and, in case of poverty, upon the goods and chattels of any other present ; and the like upon the house where the conventicle is held and the money to be divided as above.

“And it is further enacted, that the justice or justices of the peace, constables, etc., may by warrant, with what aid, force, and assistance they shall think necessary, break open, and enter into, any house or place where they shall be informed of the conventicle, and take the persons into custody. The lieutenants, or other commissioned officers of the militia, may get together such force and assistance as they think necessary, to dissolve, dissipate, and disperse such unlawful meetings, and take the persons into custody.” Then follow two extraordinary clauses : “That if any justice of the peace refuse to do his duty in the execution of this act, he shall forfeit five pounds.”

“And be it further enacted, that all clauses of this act shall be construed most largely and beneficially for the suppressing conventicles, and for the justification and encouragement of all persons to be employed in the execution thereof. No warrant or mittimus shall be made void or reversed, for any default in the form ; and if a person fly from one county or corporation to another, his goods and chattels shall be seizable wherever they are found. If the party offending be a wife cohabiting with her husband, the fine shall be levied on the goods and chattels of the husband, provided the prosecution be within three months.”

From Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. iii., p.p. 165-6.

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#### VIII.—LETTER FROM DORSET MINISTERS THANKING

CHARLES II. FOR HIS INDULGENCE TO DISSENTERS,

To the Kings most excellent Majestie.

The humble acknowledgment of severall Nonconforming ministers of the County of Dorset.

Most Gracious Souveraigne.

We your Majestie's Loyal and Peaceable subjects having to our abundant joy and satisfaction seen your Majestie's Royal Declaration

of March 15th, 1672, do from our souls bless God who hath put such a thing as this into the King's heart to extend so great a favour to us ; and prostrate ourselves at your Majestie's feet with the most humble and hearty acknowledgment of your Majestie's singular clemency, therein expressed, which encourageth us humbly to make this thankful address, devoting ourselves (under your Majestie's royal protection) to the preaching of the Gospel of Peace and Salvation. And continue to pray for your Royal Person, familie, Councill and Government as Dutie obligeth us your loyal subjects and Ministers of the Gospel.

(Signed by) James Rawson, Wm. Ben, George Thorne, Edward Buckler, Benjamin Way, Thomas Rowe, James Hallet, John White, Henry Parsons, John Kerridge, Zachary Mayne, Zechariah Sprint, John Devenish, George Hamond, Ames Short, Timothy Sacheverell, John Gill, Richard Downe, Thomas Moore, Joseph Hallet, John Pinney, Robert Bartlett, Henry Backaller, Benjamin Mills, Josuah Churchill, Philip Lambe, Jeremiah French, Henry Martin, Edward Dammer, William Gibberd, Josiah Banger, John Brice, Thomas Craine, James Owsley (or Ousley), William Clarke, John Eaton, Benjamin Walters, John Hodder.

State Papers Dom. Chas. II., 1672.

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## IX.—ARIANISM.

Arianism has so often been referred to in the foregoing sketches and has played such a disastrously important part in the history of Nonconformity, especially in the West of England, that it has been deemed expedient to give here such an account of it as it would have been manifestly impossible to repeat in each sketch and as will enable the reader to peruse what has been put before him intelligently.

Arianism is no new form of belief. It gets its name from one Arius, who lived at Alexandria in the beginning of the fourth century. He denied the essential divinity of Christ, "neither on the one hand, admitting him to be God, equal with the Father, nor on the other degrading him to the rank of a mere man." "By all this," says Neander, "He intended by no means to lower the dignity of Christ, but would ascribe to him the greatest dignity which a being could



have after God, without entirely annulling the distinction between that being and God. . . . . When God determined to produce the entire creation, he begat a being who is as like him in perfections as any creature can be, for the purpose of producing, by the instrumentality of this being, the whole creation. The names, Son of God, and Logos, were given to him in order to distinguish him from other created beings, inasmuch as, although, like created beings he owed everything to the will and favour of the Creator, he yet enjoyed the nearest relationship to Him."

Arius' tenets were condemned by the Council of Nice, A.D. 325, when what is known as the Athanasian Creed was declared to be the true faith.

These opinions, however, never wholly ceased to be held. They were little heard of, sometimes for centuries. But they were revived in England at the beginning of the last century. The writings of William Whiston, the translator of Josephus, and who was ejected from the Professorship of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge in 1710 for Arianism, and of Dr. Samuel Clarke, Rector of the Royal Parish of St. James', who published in 1712 his "Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity," were widely read by Presbyterian ministers, who, in many cases, adopted their teaching, viz. :—That although Jesus Christ was the Son of God, he was yet inferior to the Father, being himself a creature.

For our purposes here it will be sufficient to state that what is spoken of in the foregoing pages as the Arian controversy began in Exeter in the year 1716, when it began to be whispered about that several ministers of the city, of whom the most noteworthy were the Revs. James Pierce and Joseph Hallett, had adopted the Arian view of the person of Christ. They had not preached it, but it was noticed that there was a singular absence from their services of all phrases which implied the divinity of Christ. "A brother minister, in the course of a private conversation with him, finding that Mr. Pierce did not hold the orthodox view, repeated the conversation. . . . . All Exeter soon rang with the information."\* Efforts made to get an explicit statement from the suspected ministers were met either by vague and uncertain phraseology or by a denial of the right of any body of men to demand their opinions. This only added fuel to the fire. At length, at a conference of Western ministers, Mr. Pierce spoke out and said : "I am not of the

opinion of Sabellius, Arius, Socinus, or Sherlock. I believe there is but one God and can be no more ; I believe the Son and the Holy Ghost to be divine persons, but subordinate to the Father, and the unity of God is, I think, to be resolved into the Father's being the foundation of the divinity of the Son and the Spirit."

The controversy raged over the whole West. It spread to London, where it led to a division among the Nonconformist ministers that was never healed. It travelled North and was repeated in Lancashire and Cheshire, where Presbyterianism had been more fully established and completely organised than in any other part of the kingdom, except London.

It may be thought, at first sight, that too much was made of divergence of opinion on so abstruse a subject, and especially when the expression of it was so carefully guarded. But, as a matter of fact, the conception entertained by the Arians of the nature of Christ, affected their preaching. In place of the earnest evangelical sermons of the early Puritans and Nonconformist, in which the sacrifice of the eternal Son of God on the cross for the sins of men held a foremost place, there was, to say the least, no very certain sound on that subject, which, of all others, could attract and win men burdened with the sense of sin, and inspire to sacrifice and service. Nevertheless, the doctrine spread, especially among the younger and more highly-educated ministers. The fears entertained of it were justified by results, for as Arianism spread, a blight fell upon the congregations. "In less than half-a-century the doctrines of the great Founders of Presbyterianism could scarcely be heard from any Presbyterian pulpit in England." The Presbyterian Churches either disappeared, or, after prolonged controversy, which brought them to the verge of dissolution, passed into the hands of the Congregationalists, or become avowedly Unitarian.

Nonconformity went into the controversy united and strong, having the adhesion of a large number of the most influential and even aristocratic families in the country. It came out of it disunited and impoverished

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## ERRATA.

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<i>Page.</i>	<i>Line.</i>	
5	7	for Land read Laud.
27	19	read descendants.
37	8	for Mrs. read Mr.
37	28	for grand-daughter read daughter.
39	7	for 1857 read 1854.
40	36	for three read four.
64	4	for Burford read Barfoot.
64	11	for James read William.
104	15	for intrudor read intruder.
107	22	read 1874.
148	35	read Towgood.
152	4	for undifying read unedifying.
189	26	read burgess-ship.
190	13	read feoffees.
192	1	omit "character" and note.
193	5	read Micaiah.
241	27	for Chas. Bond read Charles Pond.
273	1	read (in which time it had increased nearly three-fold).
273	22	for wales read Wales.
309	7 & 9	for Twogood read Towgood.
328	35	omit "Dr. Hatch says."
345	1	After Wareham put *.
345	29	omit "the church."
346	14	for Calcroft read Calcraft.
346	22	read opportunity.
348	28	read Calvinistic.
351	8	read Russian.
356	26	omit "at after service."
357	35 note	for Whitby read Whitty.
358	12	for Volster read Vobster.
364	11	read Bristol Institute.
380	24	read came to Weymouth.
387	33	for 1862 read 1672.
393	29	for affliction read affliction.



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